TUNING IN TO THE CHOCOLATE CITY: EXAMINING THE BLACK RADIO LANDSCAPE OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

Nora A. Bess

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Alisa Perren
Department of Radio-Television-Film
Supervising Professor

_____

Charles Carson
Department of Musicology and Ethnomusicology
Second Reader

Abstract

Author: Nora Bess

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Supervising Professors: Alisa Perren, Charles Carson

In 1975, Parliament Funkadelic nicknamed Washington, D.C. "The Chocolate City," acknowledging the city's status as a center of black culture and community. As the city emerged as a booming metropolis with a thriving black population, black-owned radio was there to inform and entertain. Since the 1970s, black radio has enjoyed a privileged place among black audiences in Washington. Originally a venue for black artists to gain exposure, black radio evolved into a critical venue for black news, politics, community engagement, and entrepreneurship. Today, black radio stations in Washington, D.C. seek to balance the rapidly evolving radio landscape with claims to authenticity and efforts to draw connection with their listeners. This thesis explores three different radio ownership structures—community, college, and corporate—and their effects on programming decisions at three black radio stations in Washington, D.C. These three Washington stations – WKYS, WHUR, and WPFW – each represent different ownership models. Through interviews with programming directors at each station, analysis of show playlists, and examination of key moments in the history of each station, this thesis examines the creative, cultural, and economic considerations that go into programming decisions. This research will help shed light on the health and relevance of contemporary black radio in one local market and the varied ways that different radio outlets balance business motives with sociocultural connections.

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Introduction

Since the early 1970s, black radio in Washington, D.C. has held a privileged place in the living rooms, cars, and stereos of the city's African American community. From covering the city's turbulent politics to popularizing funk and go-go music, black owned radio stations have been essential to social and political black life in Washington. More than any other medium, radio gave blacks a powerful platform to build community and explore entrepreneurship. Unlike film and television, which present high barriers to entry and are controlled primarily by white gatekeepers, radio is a medium that, from its inception, has encouraged community participation and local flavor.

Radio's earliest uses came shortly before and during WWI. After the war ended, amateurs and hobbyists began to experiment more aggressively with the capabilities of the new technology. Most early broadcasts consisted of young men and boys with crystal sets reading local newspaper headlines, playing phonograph records, or reporting on local events or news. David Sarnoff, who founded the Radio Corporation of America in 1919, is often one of the key individuals credited with introducing radio into American life.[1] As the Depression rolled around and people were forced to sell their cars, homes, and belongings, Americans clung to their radio sets and embraced the medium as an integral part of life. As the technology improved and sets became more affordable for everyday Americans, radio became one of the first mass media forms, allowing for "the fusion of the commercial and the popular in American culture."[2]

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[1] Michele Hilmes, "Broadcasting Begins, 1919 to 1926," in *A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States*, 4th ed. (n.p.: Wadsworth, 2013), 42.

[2] William Barlow, *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 15

For the better part of the 20th century, black music and radio were involved in a sort of symbiosis. From the Jazz Age of the 1920s to the emergence of soul and funk music in the 1960s and 1970s respectively, radio stations embraced black music in order to keep up with the growing demand for it. As television began to compete with radio for audiences in the 1950s, airtime opened up for stations to specifically target black audiences with "black appeal" or "Negro stations." Through specifically targeting African-American communities, radio programmers acknowledged blacks as a valuable and largely untapped market for advertising. A 1952 article in the advertising trade publication, *Sponsor*, estimated the "Negro" market to be worth $15 billion dollars. The article cited rising home ownership, employment, and education rates among blacks after WWII as causes for economic and social advancement for African-Americans. The same article found that the approximately 250 stations in the nation that featured black appeal programming reached 90 percent of the black population.[3] These findings introduced the idea that blacks were a viable and valuable consumer population and that radio was a way to reach them. While whites owned the overwhelming majority of these stations, these developments fostered the notion of the black community as a highly valuable and loyal radio audience.

Washington, D.C. provided curious and hospitable conditions for the emergence of black owned media. From its early days as a refuge of freed slaves in the 1860s, Washington has been a center of black culture and community. Blacks in D.C., who have held the majority in the city since 1957, have long tapped into their communities and cultural capital to provide spaces and platforms for black voices. In 1892 a former slave named John Henry Jr. founded *The Washington Afro-American*, which evolved from a weekly church publication to a popular

[3] Barlow, *Voice Over*, 127.

newspaper along the coastal Atlantic, which is still in circulation today.[4] The *Afro,* along with other black-owned newspapers such as *The Washington Informer*, were critical participants in the spread of information during the Civil Rights Era and served as important sources of news to the black community.

The Civil Rights Era also gave way to activism on the airwaves. Soul music emerged not only as an extremely popular music genre, but also a political statement. Artists such as James Brown, Sam Cooke, and Ray Charles found audiences and popularity during the Civil Rights Movement as they helped promote social consciousness through their songs. In addition to playing these records, which helped give voice to the movement, black DJs at black-appeal stations also helped to mobilize black communities into action. Martin Luther King Jr. had contacts with black DJs and broadcasters throughout the nation who gave him access to local audiences when he and he his associates came to their cities. DJs also helped organize protests, discussed local elections, and relayed valuable news to the black community about the movement. On the night that Dr. King was killed, Washington, D.C's top black DJ, Bob "Nighthawk" Terry was working the control board at WOL-AM. As outraged and angered blacks took to the streets to riot, Terry not only made a plea for peace to black protestors, but also criticized white listeners who, "run back to Maryland and Virginia suburbs every evening and leave the problems back here in the city."[5] The fact that most black DJs, such as Nighthawk, were working for white-owned stations suggests that station owners involved themselves in black politics in order to reach and build their black audiences.

Blacks and broadcast media in Washington, D.C. experienced strange intimacies for most of the 20th century. During this time, most black radio in D.C. followed the "black appeal

[4] "Newspapers: The Afro-American," PBS, http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/news_bios/afroamerican.html.
[5] Barlow, *Voice Over*, 219.

model"— i.e., they were white-owned stations spinning black records. While stations began to hire black DJs and station staff, the majority of radio entrepreneurs and profiteers were white. Whites were curators of black community and culture because they were the gatekeepers to broadcast and mass media. However, the latter part of the twentieth century presented blacks with new opportunities for entrepreneurship and radio ownership. As blacks began to assume station ownership, they faced the same dilemma as their white predecessors: how to balance profitability and viability with connection to their audiences.

This thesis will focus on the context and conditions for black radio entrepreneurship in Washington, D.C. and the role that black-owned radio plays in the Washington, D.C. area at present. I will also focus on different models of radio ownership that black-owned stations operate under and the role that these different ownership structures play in stations' programming decisions. The scope of this thesis has been limited to three black-owned and operated stations in Washington, D.C.: WKYS, WHUR, and WPFW. While Washington has about 10 black owned and operated stations,[6] I chose to focus on these three as case studies because each represents a different ownership structure. The black media conglomerate, Radio One, owns WKYS; Howard University owns WHUR; and WPFW is a community oriented radio station owned by Pacifica. Media scholar Mark Newman describes black radio as a delicate balance between profits and pride, describing pride as a "potent marketing tool in the pursuit of profits."[7] This thesis will attempt to explore the ways in which black-owned radio in one local market balances the entrepreneurial, entertainment, and socio-cultural capabilities and possibilities of the medium.

[6] Not including the Greater Washington-Metropolitan area
[7] Mark Newman, *Entrepreneurs of Profit and Pride* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 8.

The first chapter contextualizes radio as a medium and explains the different models and formats available and under which the contemporary stations in my study operate. I include this chapter to explain the different financial and structural considerations behind the radio industry and provide a framework to think about the stations included in my study. The second chapter focuses on the social and political conditions that gave rise to black radio and entrepreneurship in the city. I also include a section on Howard University to give background on WHUR's values and mission as a radio station. While the thesis primarily focuses on the contemporary black radio landscape in Washington, I have also included information on the history of the city for context. Such specificity indicates the degree to which as well as the ways that different stations engage with and respond to this particular community. The third chapter explores the varied programming decisions at WHUR, WKYS, and WPFW and the extent to which these decisions play into a larger brand identity for each station. In this section, I include interviews that I conducted with radio professionals—program directors, general managers, schedulers—at the stations in my study. These professionals help provide insight into current station operations. This chapter also looks at specific programs and playlists from these stations and considers how they tie into the stations' marketing and branding strategies. The final section of this chapter examines the financial considerations that go into contemporary commercial and public radio along with the financial health of each station. Additionally, this chapter will look at current threats to the radio industry such as online radio and streaming. Here I point to the current state of affairs for the black radio landscape in Washington.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between programming and ownership at black radio stations in Washington, D.C. The primary question guiding my research was: How does programming from three different D.C. stations reflect the values and motivations of black radio station owners? Secondary questions that I used to focus my research were: What is the historical and socio-political context of each of these radio stations? What current challenges does the radio industry face? What role does black radio play in the Washington-metro African-American community?

This study employed human subjects research along with analysis of Nielsen Audio reports, scholarly articles, and radio playlists and programs. For my human subjects research, I conducted interviews with current employees at WPFW, WHUR, and WKYS. Prior to initiating the study, I submitted a proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Texas at Austin for review. Following approval, I recruited individuals directly involved with programming at the three stations. All of the individuals I contacted consented to participate and I conducted my interviews either in-person or over the phone between December 2016 and March of 2017.

I conducted digitally recorded interviews with the following individuals for the purpose of my study:

- Jerry Paris, General Manager of WPFW 89.3
- Hector Hannibal, Programming Director at WHUR 96.3
- Neke Howse, Programming Director at WKYS 93.9

Participation in the study was voluntary and participants provided verbal consent.

I. Introducing the Idea of Mandates

Radio as a medium walks a line between being an entertainment vehicle and a marketing tool. While programmers and content producers create content that audiences want to listen to, they also must be attentive to generating income. Timothy Havens and Amanda Lotz explain this balance using the framework of media industry mandates, defined as, "the primary goal or reason for being of the media industry." They add that this goal "contributes significantly to how the media industry is likely to behave and what content it is likely to produce." Havens and Lotz frame the idea of mandates around the question of "who pays for it?" and split mandates into two categories—commercial and non-commercial.[8]

Profits drive media that operate under commercial mandates. Commercially mandated media can make money by charging users a subscription fee, selling air time to advertisers or a combination of the two. With the exception of XM radio, most radio stations operating under commercial mandates make profits by selling advertising time. Advertiser-supported content, such as commercial radio, is designed to reach certain demographics that advertisers believe will attract certain types of customers.[9] For example, ad spots for black hair care products often air on stations that play R&B and hip-hop music, as this programming frequently attracts African-American listeners. Havens and Lotz argue, "Almost every fact of commercial media production comes back to a question of what those most valued consumers desire."[10]

The types of programming that commercial radio stations air are largely informed by the format that they fall under. Black radio stations, in particular, typically fall under one of two

[8] Timothy Havens and Amanda Lotz, "Media Industry Mandates," in *Understanding Media Industries* (n.p.: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51.
[9] Havens and Lotz, "Media Industry," in *Understanding Media*, 51.
[10] Havens and Lotz, "Media Industry," in *Understanding Media*, 54.

categories—urban adult and urban adult contemporary—that differ in terms of the content that they air as well as the demographics that they aim to reach. Urban contemporary radio stations are targeted towards adult listeners, particular black adult listeners, from 18-34 in age. Most urban contemporary radio stations are located in U.S. cities or metropolitan areas with sizeable African-American populations. Popularized in the mid-1970s by New York City DJ, Frankie Crocker, the urban contemporary radio format was designed as a way to appeal to advertisers who felt that "black radio" did not reach a wide enough audience.[11] Playlists on urban contemporary radio stations typically feature top-selling R&B and hip-hop music that also is on the top 40 charts. Urban contemporary radio stations typically have achieved great success nationally, capturing 30% of all radio listening among adults aged 12-34. [12]

The urban adult contemporary radio format branches off of urban contemporary radio and differs in terms of both content and demographics. Since 2006, Urban Adult Contemporary has been the number one radio format among black radio listeners. Urban adult contemporary radio typically aims to appeal to an older demographic, listeners between 35 and 65+.[13] In contrast to urban contemporary stations, urban adult contemporary stations typically do not play hip-hop or rap music. Urban adult contemporary stations typically have a much more relaxed sound and play a mix of contemporary and traditional R&B music. On Sunday mornings, some urban adult contemporary stations may even include religious programming or gospel music. According to

[11] Barlow, *Voice Over*, 234
[12] Arbitron, *Black Radio Today 2013*, 3, 2013, http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/Black_Radio_Today_2013_execsum.pdf.
[13] Arbitron, *Black Radio*.

Arbitron, listeners to urban adult contemporary stations typically have higher household incomes and higher levels of educational attainment than listeners of urban contemporary radio.[14]

In contrast to commercial media, media that operate under non-commercial mandates are not driven by the quest for profits but rather, a host of other political and cultural forces. As such, non-commercial media typically aims to educate and inform their listeners rather than merely entertain. Havens and Lotz propose the public mandate, community/alternative mandate, and government mandate as motivators behind non-commercial media. Most non-commercially mandated radio in the United States falls under public mandates.

Traditionally, taxes and government subsidies have funded radio that operates under public mandates. However, over time, most public broadcasting systems have come to operate under a mixed mandate system, receiving funding from listener support, advertising, and sponsorship in addition to taxpayer funding.[15] Because public radio receives government funding, it must adhere to a certain set of guidelines provided by the FCC. Since 1938, the Federal Communications Commission has mandated that a certain portion of the spectrum be set aside for noncommercial use with the hopes of preserving radio's original purpose of education and information. While the vast majority of radio stations operate commercially, the FCC sets aside the lowest 20 channels on the FM broadcast band for non-commercial use. In order for a station to receive a noncommercial radio license, it must meet a series of requirements as they relate to programming, underwriting, and governance.[16]

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[14] Arbitron, *Black Radio*

[15] Havens and Lotz, "Media Industry," in *Understanding Media*, 51.

[16] Federal Communications Commission, *The Information Needs of Communities: The changing media landscape in a broadband age*, by Steven Waldman, 315, July 2011, https://transition.fcc.gov/osp/inc-report/INoC-31-Nonprofit-Media.pdf.

Noncommercial radio licenses are only available to stations with "educational purposes." However, the FCC has largely left this concept of, "educational programming" undefined, thereby largely allowing for stations and programmers to determine what content appropriately fits into this category. The vast majority of noncommercial radio licenses (42%) go to religious broadcasters. NPR stations hold 30% of non-commercial radio licenses with the remaining 28% held by other types of broadcasters such as college and community broadcasters.[17]

While noncommercial radio stations typically receive some funding from the government, they often face significant funding deficiencies, leaving many stations dependent on donations from listeners and foundations. Certain FCC laws and regulations limit the ability of non-commercial radio stations to generate revenue. Public broadcasters thus face unique challenges as they are unable to earn a profit while needing to raise revenue to cover their operating costs. In 1984, an FCC policy known as "enhanced underwriting" expanded stations' ability to raise revenue. Under this policy, stations were permitted to air donor and underwriter acknowledgements from for-profit entities, identifying, but not promoting businesses. However, enhanced underwriting can at times have gray areas, as broadcasters attempt to formulate message that positively acknowledge businesses while remaining value-neutral.[18] Public radio's need to generate revenue is also complicated by the identity and values of many public radio listeners.

Havens and Lotz also propose community mandates as a motivation for some media operations. While community and public mandates are, for the most part, similar, community mandated media is more focused on pursuing a specific audience: "Instead of aiming to serve the

[17] Federal Communications Commission, *The Information,* 315.
[18] Federal Communications Commission, *The Information*, 315.

citizenry of a nation, they might aim to reach a neighborhood or a specific group within a city." Community mandated media typically relies more heavily on donations and listener support than does public media, which typically receives generous government support.[19]

[19] Havens and Lotz, "Media Industry," in *Understanding Media*.

Chapter II: Dollars on the Dials

DJs, playlists, and news programs aside, radio at its core is a business. While a station needs loyal listeners and quality programming, it also needs money to pay the electricity bill, and to cover costs for music licensing, studio equipment, transmitters, and staff. And, at the end of the day, most commercial stations would like to see a few dollars in profits. Programming, advertising, and listenership all tie into the question that Havens and Lotz pose regarding media industry mandates: who pays for it? This chapter will explore the creative and cultural implications that the radio industry has faced in navigating this question.

Historically, the role of advertising in radio broadcasting has been hotly contested. As radio began to enter mainstream American life in the late 1920s, entrepreneurs and station managers grappled with how to pay for it. Initially, radio programming was a way for manufacturers to sell radio sets to consumers. Radio manufacturers sought to provide high quality (and primarily high brow) content to consumers in order to convince people to buy the necessary receivers to listen to it. Radio and electronic manufacturers who broadcast news, classical music, and educational programming owned the vast majority of early radio stations. KDKA, a pioneer in early radio broadcasting, often featured live classical music performances, religious performances, and live sports commentary. The Interstate Commerce Commission, which regulated radio until 1927, established a system of station licensing, aimed at improving and enforcing the quality of radio content.[20] Class B broadcasters, who could transmit their signals at a higher power to a wider area, were forbidden from playing phonograph records. This logic was bound to Progressive-Era ideals prevalent at the time that sought to uplift and socially

[20]Hilmes, "Broadcasting Begins," 43.

advance the public. The ban on phonograph records was designed to stifle the popularity of jazz, seen at the time as a crude and explicit musical genre.

In the early days, radio regulators and broadcasters viewed radio as a "pure" medium, a public good that could bring education and high culture into American homes. Most early ads for radio receivers depicted listeners in fine clothes and elegant homes, suggesting that radio was a purveyor of prestige, a connection with upper class-ness.[21] Critics to radio advertising viewed it as an intrusion into the home. One editorial in *Printer's Ink*, an advertising trade magazine read, "We are opposed to advertising [on the radio] for the same reason we are opposed to skywriting. People should not be forced to read advertising unless they are so inclined."[22] The U.S. government and the station managers alike feared that direct advertising would threaten the prestige and dignity of the medium. However, faced with mounting operating costs and slowing receiver sales, over the course of the 1920s and 1930s (partially attributable to the Great Depression), radio stations began to accept advertising as a way of funding more appealing programming.

Today, the vast majority of American radio stations are commercially operated, meaning that privately owned media, as opposed to the state, broadcasts programs. Revenue for commercial radio stations comes from selling audiences to advertisers; the more listeners a station attracts, the more it can charge advertisers for airtime. Ratings are the primary metric that stations use to gauge their audience size and reach and factor in heavily to the rates they charge to advertisers for airtime. As such, most commercial radio stations carefully track their ratings and look for possible areas of improvement in terms of programming.

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[21] Debra Merskin, "History: 1920s," in *The Advertising Age Encyclopedia of Advertising*, ed. John McDonough and Karen Egolf (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2002), 768.
[22] Merskin, "History: 1920s," 769.

All of the programmers I interviewed were obviously aware of the importance of appealing content to their bottom line; in some fashion, all described programming strategies that were focused on appealing to their listeners. However, WHUR and WKYS, the two commercial radio stations in my study, showed vastly different approaches to the role that third-party advertising played in relation to programmed content. Hector Hannibal of WHUR views the station as an important asset to Howard University's operations:

> Well, this is a business that is owned by the University. So, like the dental school, like any other college, they're in business to make money for the university. And so, we try to take advantage of any financial opportunities, we have a sales department of about seven, eight people who are out there pounding the streets, driving business, and so as an entity of the university, we make money for the university. They give us a budget to run the radio station and we do that and hopefully we do it profitably every year and it keeps everybody happy.[23]

Molette Green, a news reporter at WHUR, sees the station as funded by advertising, but not motivated by it.

> HUR was set up to not only be this, you know, commercial radio station, but also serve a vital role in the community through community service, and that's why the station has done a lot of outreach...in the community; holding...political forums to introduce listeners to candidates who will become elected officials and make decisions about their lives. But the station also is an integral part of Howard University education...particularly for the School of Communication, those students are supposed to be utilizing the radio station as a learning tool. That's what I did when I was a student at Howard. I used the radio station to hone my skills as a journalist, as a broadcaster. So the radio station has more than one purpose, not just to play music and entertain, [but to] serve the community and also serve the Howard University student population.[24]

This statement echoes Hannibal's sentiments that hold WHUR to be an extension of Howard as a university. For WHUR, advertising revenue and profits serve to benefit Howard and the greater D.C. community rather than the bottom line of the station and shareholders. WHUR's history reflects an evolution from a largely educational model to a commercial one. In 1971, anticipating new regulations that would prohibit newspapers from owning broadcast outlets in the same city, the *Washington Post* donated WHUR (then under the call letters, WTOP-FM) to Howard

[23] Hannibal, interview by the author.
[24] Jenkins, "An Exploration," 51.

University in order to "to stimulate the intellectual and cultural life of the whole community and to train more people for the communications industry."[25] Since then, the station has transformed from a mostly educational space for the school's broadcasting and journalism students to a veritable moneymaking asset for the university.

WHUR is something of an anomaly among college-owned radio stations. Most "college radio" stations might be run by a few megalomaniac college students playing obscure records and hosting quirky talk shows. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, college radio stations were an especially vital aspect of the music industry and radio ecosystem. Most were willing to take a chance on new music, and could help emerging artists gain exposure and a fan base. College radio served as a liaison between A&R departments and new talent. Although college radio initially was used to broadcast lectures for educational purposes, it quickly became important promotional venues for emerging artists throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. Bands such as U2, the Smiths, and Nirvana credit their early successes to forward-thinking college radio DJs.[26]

These stations, which operated under a non-commercial model, have seen their influence and viability decline in recent years, causing many to transfer their broadcast licenses to larger conglomerates. One of the biggest college radio takeovers occurred in 2014 when Georgia State University ceded 100 hours per week of airtime at its station WRAS-FM to Georgia Public Media for 150,000 dollars per year. Broadcasting at 100,000 watts, WRAS was one of the largest and most influential college radio stations in the country. After the takeover, student DJs and programs were relegated to the overnight hours and lost a substantial listener base.[27] Many

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[25] "History," Graham Holdings, http://www.ghco.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=62487&p=irol-history1950.
[26] Kevin Lozano, "Does College Radio Even Matter Anymore?," *Pitchfork*, February 8, 2017, http://pitchfork.com/features/article/10018-does-college-radio-even-matter-anymore/
[27] Rodney Ho, "GPB's partnership with GSU and WRAS one year later," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), August 27, 2015, http://radiotvtalk.blog.ajc.com/2015/08/27/gpbs-partnership-with-gsu-and-wras-one-year-later/.

other college stations have sold their broadcast licenses to NPR affiliates, which in turn have used the stations to simulcast NPR programs, pre-programmed playlists, or classical music.[28] While public radio has enjoyed significant growth in recent years as a result of acquiring college radio stations, it has done so at the expense of student voices.

Despite national trends among college-owned radio stations, WHUR has thrived and retained a number three spot in the Washington-area radio rankings. This is likely largely due to WHUR's management structure. While WHUR management encourages Howard students to take an active role in the station through internships and mentoring, its managerial and on-air staff is comprised of paid professionals. Radio veterans and seasoned DJs run the station rather than students, enabling the station to operate professionally and smartly and provide continuity as students come and go. The station also runs ads and operates a sales department, a huge contrast to the majority of college radio stations that operate under a non-commercial, public service model. By treating the radio station as a moneymaking asset for the university rather than as an outlet for creative college students, WHUR has managed to thrive amidst growing threats to college radio stations.

WKYS

I chose to include WKYS in this study because it most exemplifies the commercial approach to radio and programming. While both WPFW and WHUR to some degree have

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[28] Lozano, "Does College,"

deemphasized money in their bottom line, WKYS has made it no secret that their primary focus is profit.

When asked about the primary mission of the station, Neke Howse, the station's program director responded, "Our mission is to be number one in the market in terms of overall sales force."[29] In its desire to cast the broadest net and reach the largest possible audience, WKYS has the least specialized programming. While technically labeled as "urban contemporary," WKYS borrows heavily from Top 40 programming conventions. In the Top 40 radio format, stations run a cycle of about 30 popular songs selected based on their rankings on the *Billboard* and *Radio & Records* charts. Commercial music stations, like WKYS, belong to music licensing groups like ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) and BMI (Broadcast Music Incorporated), which provide access to catalogs of around 4 million songs each. Stations generally obtain a blanket license, which allows them to play any music from the catalog, in exchange for a percentage of the station's overall revenue. ASCAP charges a 1.7% license fee[30] per year meaning that WKYS, which made 12.4 million dollars in 2014[31], would have paid around 211,000 dollars for music licensing that year.

While commercial radio stations like WKYS have access to a huge music catalog, they often play an extremely narrow set of hit songs in hopes of reaching their target audience. Neke Howse emphasized the importance of hits and new music in her programming strategy, describing it as her number one consideration. By playing new and popular music aimed at its target demographic, Howse uses programming to meet WKYS' bottom line.

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[29] Neke Howse, telephone interview by the author, Washington, DC, March 8, 2017.
[30] "Radio," ASCAP, https://www.ascap.com/music-users/types/radio.
[31] Carolyn M. Proctor, "Radio Stations Ranked by 2015 revenue," Washington Business Journal, last modified November 25, 2016, http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/subscriber-only/2016/11/25/radio-stations.html.

Chapter III. Setting the Stage: A Brief History of Blacks in Washington, D.C

For the better part of the 20th century, Washington, D.C. was a sleepy southern town. In the mid 20th century, Washington was one of many cities in the country experiencing a wave of white flight—wealthy whites leaving the urban center for the suburbs while an influx of blacks from the South moved into the city. By 1968, blacks made up 67% of the population in the District of Columbia; however, like many Southern cities Washington remained deeply segregated[32]. The city was deeply divided racially by Rock Creek Park, with most white residents living on the west side of the park and most black residents living on the east side. While institutions such as Howard University and the federal government provided some blacks with upward mobility, the majority of blacks lived in ghettoes and slums.

Washington's status as a federal district meant that for most of its history, the demands of the federal government took precedence over the needs of the local populace. The city was established in 1788 as the nation's capital—a seat of government that would not be reliant on any given state for protection or security. The District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801 formally placed the affairs of Washington under Congressional control and established a municipal government comprised of a mayor appointed by the president. However, Washington was designed to be an administrative capital; it was not intended or envisioned as being the booming

[32] Steven J. Diner, "From Jim Crow to Home Rule," *The Wilson Quarterly*, January 1989, 91, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40257447.

metropolis that it has turned into today.[33] For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, Washington was under the jurisdiction of Congress.

Residents of the Capital City often distinguish "Washington"—the nation's seat of power—from "The District," a city that is home to diverse industries and people. While "Washington" was conducting the governance and affairs of the nation on Capitol Hill in its early years, "The District" was drawing in thousands of black residents from the South. By 1830, free slaves made up approximately 30% of Washington's population. After the Civil War, an estimated 25,000 African Americans moved to Washington, D.C. because of its pro-Union status and already sizeable black population. By 1900, Washington led the nation in terms of cities with the highest population of blacks and it continued to grow as a black cultural capital into the first half of the twentieth century.[34] U Street preceded Harlem as the center of black culture in America and gave birth to musicians such as Duke Ellington and Shirley Horn. President Truman's 1948 executive order eliminating discrimination in federal agencies helped further attract blacks to the city in search of good-paying jobs.

By 1960, blacks made up 54 percent of Washington's population—a number equally attributable to the influx of blacks from the south and the movement of white families from the cities to the suburbs in a trend called "white flight."[35] Government in Washington during the 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by paternalism and racism as white officials governed a mostly black populace. This dynamic had been in place since the early days of Jim Crow, mostly

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[33] Michael Judah Sachse, "The D.C. Home Rule Movement 1966 - 1973" (master's thesis, Amherst, 1999), 2.

[34] Marya Annette McQuirter, PhD, "A Brief History of African Americans in Washington, DC," African American Heritage Trail, last modified 2003, http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/portal/a-brief-history-of-african-americans-in-washington-dc.

[35] Diner, "From Jim Crow," 93.

due to the organization of local government in D.C. Since 1874, Washington was under a system of direct rule by Congress that was headed by three federally appointed commissioners (called the House District Committee). This system essentially meant that Congress served as city council, overseeing the daily affairs and finances of the city. These positions in the House District Committee were, "a proving ground for junior members or a dumping ground for embarrassing ones," which a succession of segregationists used to exert power over Washington's blacks.[36] John L. McMillan, a Congressman from South Carolina, served as Chairman of the House District Committee in the 1950s and fostered a paternalistic and patronizing environment for the city's black residents. McMillan kept budgets for social services low, allocated tax dollars to construction projects for white businesses, and deliberately allowed a home rule bill to die in his committee, ensuring that District residents would not have control over their own governmental affairs.[37]

As a result of the neglectful attitude that Congress had towards Washington, divisions deepened between the city's blacks into the 1960s. While some blacks prospered and moved into the middle class as a result of good-paying federal jobs and education from the historically black university, Howard, about 20,000 of the city's roughly 400,000 blacks lived in poverty in the city's slums, located just a quarter mile from the Capitol. [38]

The 1960s ushered in the Civil Rights Movement and with it, growing outrage among black Washingtonians about their living conditions. Police brutality, housing segregation, and poor quality schools were stirring blacks across the country (as well as within Washington, D.C.) to organize and mobilize, perhaps most visibly in the 1964 March on Washington for Jobs and

[36] Harry S. Jaffe and Tom Sherwood, *Dream City: Race, Power, and the Decline of Washington, D.C.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 27.
[37] Jaffe and Sherwood, *Dream City,* 28.
[38] Jaffe and Sherwood, *Dream City,* 13.

Freedom. One of the enigmatic founders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Marion Barry opened a Washington chapter of SNCC and quickly began to mobilize the black community in protesting segregation and discrimination. Outspoken and charismatic, Barry began to sow seeds of black pride among Washington blacks. He founded a jobs program, Pride Inc., which provided job training and employment to black men. Barry also helped to organize a boycott of the city's bus system after a fare hike, citing that the hike disproportionately affected poor blacks. Additionally, Marion Barry sought to free Washington blacks from the racist, paternalistic control of Congress. While his "Free D.C." movement lacked the infrastructure and support to get off the ground, it sparked conversations among the city's blacks about their conditions. Barry helped draw attention to the paternalistic and racist nature of D.C.'s government and laid the foundations for future resistance.

The 1968 Washington riots, spurred by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., brought racial tensions in the city to a head. Disillusioned by segregation in housing and schools, high unemployment rates, and a militaristic and racist police force, black Washingtonians took to the streets. Rioters burned buildings and stores along the city's U Street Corridor, causing an estimated $15 million dollars in damage. When the last flames had been put out, 12 people were dead, 6,300 mostly black people arrested, and blocks upon blacks of stores and buildings in mostly black neighborhoods burned out and boarded up.[39] The city was no longer able to ignore the racial tensions that had been bubbling to the surface for years.

[39] Jaffe and Sherwood, *Dream City,* 81.

Following pressure by an increasingly black city and nationwide protests over civil rights, the federal government finally took action against the injustice that was happening in their own backyard. After more than a century of fighting for self-governance, Congress enacted the District of Columbia Home Rule Act in 1973, allowing Washingtonians to elect their city government for the first time. The moderate black politician, Walter Fauntroy became the first delegate for the District of Columbia. Unlike Barry who alienated Congress with his radical views, Fauntroy was heavily supported by the black church and communicated well with Congress—allowing him to push forward D.C. home rule legislation in the House with ease. The Act provided an elected mayor position and a City Council comprised of representatives from each of the city's eight wards an in January of 1975. At the same time, Washingtonians elected their first mayor, the former Mayor-Commissioner, Walter E. Washington. While Washington was African-American, his mostly black constituents felt his loyalties still remained mostly with the white power structures that previously controlled the city. In the next mayoral election in 1978, Washington was defeated by the enigmatic SNCC leader Marion Barry, who would define politics in the District for the next two decades.[40]

D.C.'s political and cultural histories were essential to the formation of the black radio landscape in Washington. The stations in my study, which all were established in the late 70s, reflect a trend towards black empowerment and black entrepreneurship. Black radio in D.C. not only helped to cover and foster the Civil Rights and Home Rule movement in D.C., but also reflected an increasingly empowered black population that demanded control over its media.

[40]Jaffe and Sherwood, *Dream City,* 123.

Howard University

"The lighter-skinned blacks didn't associate with the darker blacks, and the Howard University blacks didn't associate with anyone"-Calvin Rolark Jr, Founder, The Washington Informer[41]

Howard University's history and legacy is integral to WHUR's values and identity. Its place as a leading historically black university informs WHUR's status as a black media powerhouse in Washington. Throughout its history, Howard University has been both central to and removed from black life in Washington, D.C. Chartered in 1867, Howard was part of a wave of historically black colleges and universities founded in the aftermath of the Civil War to provide higher education to African-Americans. Its nickname "The Hilltop" refers to Howard's location on a sloping 256 acres overlooking the city's U Street and Shaw neighborhoods. Along with well-paying federal jobs, Howard University was essential in establishing Washington's black middle class. Its Schools in medicine, dentistry, law, and divinity helped produce a class of highly educated, highly skilled black professionals. By 1940, almost half of all African-Americans holding master's degrees earned them from Howard.[42] Howard also served a center of black intellectual thought, attracting the likes of Thurgood Marshall, Zora Neale Hurston, and Toni Morrison as students. Hurston wrote that she was drawn to Howard because it was a center of "Negro money, beauty, and prestige."[43] At a time, when most colleges and universities were segregated, Howard University represented black excellence and exceptionalism.

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[41] Jaffe and Sherwood, *Dream City,* 29.
[42] Audrey Elisa Kerr, "The History of Color Prejudice at Howard University," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 54 (Winter 2006): 82, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25073596.
[43] Brian McClure, "Zora Neale Hurston: The Howard Years," State of HBCUs, last modified July 20, 2011, https://stateofhbcus.wordpress.com/2011/07/20/zora-neale-hurston-the-howard-university-years/

Howard University long has been tied to notions of prestige and class within the black community—but not always in a positive light. In his book, *Ready for Revolution*, Stokely Carmichael describes the widespread perception of Howard within the black community during the 1960s: "Howard's most egregious image in the African community was as an elitist enclave, a "bougie" school where fraternities and sororities, partying, shade consciousness, conspicuous consumption, status anxiety, and class and color snobbery dominated a student body content for the most part with merely 'getting over' academically."[44] Unfortunately, as some blacks gained wealth and education, they sought to distance themselves from the black community. Colorism, or discrimination based on skin tone, was prevalent at Howard. During the early part of the 20th century, it was customary to send in a photograph with one's application. Some said that the school's mostly light-skinned and white passing administration gave preferential treatment to, "those who resembled themselves."[45]Various alumni of the university, including Zora Neale Hurston, have recalled "paper bag" parties. At these parties, a paper bag was held up to one's skin and only those with a lighter complexion than the bag would be granted entry. Despite being a distinctly black college, notions of prestige and class in Howard's early history were tied to proximity to whiteness.

Despite early accusations of colorism and elitism, Howard University was central to the civil rights movement of the mid-20th century. As the fires from the 1968 race riots burned a few blocks from Howard's campus, students seized academic buildings in protest of what they deemed a Eurocentric curriculum and an administration that was removed from the needs of its

[44] Stokely Carmichael, "Everything and Its Opposite," in *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2005), 114.
[45] Kerr, "The History," 82.

black students. Students demanded the creation of an African-American studies department, the appointment of a black university president, and more engagement with the black, working class neighborhood of the campus. Even before the creation of its radio station, Howard's student media was a valuable channel for students to express their political and social views. [46]

Today, Howard University has lost some of the prestige and reputation it enjoyed at its zenith. While Howard still is a leader among black colleges and universities, in recent years it has faced budget cuts and a shaky administration. In 2013, Howard's U.S. News and World Report ranking dropped 22 places from the previous year to 142nd, a jolt for a university usually ranking in the top 100.[47] Howard's declining enrollment, reduced federal funding, staff cuts, and alleged fiscal mismanagement have detracted top talent from attending and teaching at the university. While Howard does a good job of producing Rhodes, Marshall, and Fulbright scholars, many students report that their time at Howard can be colored by bureaucratic dysfunction and spotty access to resources. Still, Howard University remains a source of pride among the black community. President Obama gave the commencement speech in 2016. Ta-Nahesi Coates and Rep. John Lewis are both regulars on campus. Howard's annual homecoming regularly attracts big-name rappers, scores of alums, and is a subject of lore within the black community. Five of the nine national black Greek letter organizations were chartered there and its annual events such as Homecoming and Bison Ball attract national media coverage. Contemporarily, many blacks view Howard as a center of black culture and education with

[46] Barlow, *Voice Over*, 240.
[47] Tamar Lewin, "In Surprise Move, President of Howard University Resigns as Budget Troubles Loom," *The New York Times*, October 2, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/03/education/in-surprise-move-president-of-howard-university-resigns-as-budget-troubles-loom.html.

rappers such as Drake and Ludacris giving nods to the school in their songs. Due to its historicity, famous alumni, and legacy as a center of black intellectualism, the black community tends to look at Howard University with rose-colored glasses. However, numbers complicate this picture. While Howard is the leading producer of African Americans with doctorate degrees, its hospital also posted a $58 million dollar loss last year and laid off several staff. [48] Despite its rich heritage and reputation within the black community, today's Howard University is a campus of juxtapositions.

[48] Tina Reed, "Howard University Hospital posted $58 million loss last year," Washington Business Journal, last modified March 23, 2015, http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/blog/2015/03/howard-university-hospital-posted-58-million-loss.html.

IV. Major Players in Washington, DC Radio

Washington, D.C. is a strong center for black media with TV networks such as BET, Centric, and TV One originating there. Additionally, D.C. has a diverse black radio landscape, reflecting the sizeable African American population in the city and its surrounding suburbs. For the purposes of my study, I will focus on three black radio stations in Washington, D.C: WPFW (community), WHUR (college), and WKYS (commercial). I believe that these stations represent the diversity of the black radio landscape in Washington, D.C. in terms of ownership structures, programming conventions, and target demographics. These stations also represent a cross-section of the different mandates, which media operate under. WPFW, WHUR, and WKYS portray the range of approaches that broadcast media take to balancing profit and content.

WKYS is part of the Radio One media empire, a black-owned media company with 55 radio stations across the country, a cable television station (TV One), and print and digital media assets such as BlackAmericaWeb.com and Reach Media. Cathy Hughes, a programmer at Howard University's radio station WHUR, founded Radio One in 1980. Hughes started the Radio One media empire with the purchase of the AM station, WOL. Hughes integrated local talk and news into the station's programming, which was aimed at addressing issues of interest to the African-American community. Programming her station for the urban audience of Washington, Hughes often brought local political and community members into the studio for interviews, fomenting the stations activist and advocacy slant.[49]

[49] Marc Fisher, "WHUR, Digitally Reclaiming Its Pioneering Past," *The Washington Post*, January 7, 2007, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/style/2007/01/07/whur-digitally-reclaiming-its-pioneering-past/65da7322-d752-460a-82e0-f300d8a94388/?utm_term=.812c1349f950.

In 1987, Hughes went on to purchase the FM station WMMJ. Initially, her lenders pushed her to program the station in an easy listening format, playing popular soft mainstream pop. However, Hughes eventually changed the programming format to urban adult contemporary—playing oldies and R&B music designed to appeal to black audiences, particularly older, middle class, black audiences. Radio One went on to purchase WKYS in 1995. This station sought to appeal to a younger urban audience (18-35) with an urban contemporary format. Unlike WMMJ's focus on urban adult contemporary, much of WKYS's programming featured popular hip-hop and rap music.

Howard University's radio station, WHUR, dominates the black radio landscape of Washington, D.C with nearly half a million listeners daily. As of November, WHUR was the third-highest rated radio station in the D.C. metropolitan area according to Nielsen radio figures. WHUR had an AQH share of 5.9 in November, meaning that on average, 590 people listened to the station for at least five minutes during a fifteen-minute period.[50]

Due to new federal legislation passed in the 1970s that prohibited newspapers from owning broadcasting assets in the same city as their publications, *The Washington Post* donated its FM station, WTOP, to Howard University. At the time that WHUR went on the air in 1971, the black radio landscape in Washington, D.C. was largely comprised of white-owned AM stations that played soul music but avoided covering issues related to race or politics. However, as the civil rights movement reached its zenith and race riots took over the city, community activists demanded greater control and involvement in media and entertainment.

WHUR responded to that demand for a more multidimensional black media landscape. WHUR's early programming in the seventies resisted the mold of fast-talking DJs and soul

[50] "WASHINGTON, DC RADIO RATINGS FOR SUBSCRIBING STATIONS," table, Nielsen, November 23, 2016, https://tlr.nielsen.com/tlr/public/ratingsDisplay.do?method=loadRatingsForMarket.

music that was dominant at the time. Rather than focus on a monolithic vision of blackness, WHUR featured lectures, folk tales, political speeches, Delta blues, and lengthy jazz pieces—reflecting diverse facets of the black experience. Additionally, the station featured interviews and stories from previously marginalized black groups in the city such as immigrants and government workers.[51]

WHUR also appealed to the growing group of blacks living in the suburbs of Washington. In 1970, about 25% of the black population in the Washington metropolitan area lived in the suburbs, with that figure almost doubling to 47% percent by 1980, and reaching 83% by 2000.[52] As upwardly mobile blacks began to separate spatially from urban areas and defined themselves as members of the black middle class, media programmed to reach blacks did the same. WHUR's signal extended further into the suburbs of D.C. than other urban-centered AM stations, giving it the capacity to reach the black middle class who had moved into the suburbs. [53] In addition to appealing to black intellectuals through news programming and jazz, WHUR has been prominently credited with pioneering the popular "quiet storm" radio format. Launched in 1976 by a young WHUR DJ, Melvin Lindsay, the quiet storm radio format featured hours of uninterrupted slow jams and R&B hits catering to an urban adult audience. Over time, *The Original Quiet Storm* came to be the station's hallmark, eventually jumping to the Number 1 program in its time slot.[54]

In contrast to WHUR and Radio One stations, WPFW operates under a non-commercial community radio model. Owned by the Pacifica Radio Network, WPFW's content leans strongly

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[51] Fisher, "WHUR, Digitally,"
[52] Karyn Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 44.
[53] Eric Harvey, "The Quiet Storm," *Pitchfork*, May 15, 2012, http://pitchfork.com/features/underscore/8822-the-quiet-storm/.
[54] Fisher, "WHUR, Digitally,"

to the left and features grassroots news programs as well as music shows dedicated to soul, jazz, and blues. Unlike WHUR, WPGC, and WKYS, WPFW does not run ads and relies heavily on listener support attained through pledge drives.

WPFW's status as a Pacifica-owned station heavily influences its structure and its programming strategies. Initially launched in 1949 with KPFA in Berkeley, California, the Pacifica Radio network is a group of five independently owned and listener-supported radio stations. Pacifica Radio stations "pioneered the 'alternative' ethos: that community radio is a haven for nontraditional approaches to music, literature and even spirituality—and for radical critiques of current events."[55]

Much of WPFW's current programming features jazz, regional southern music such as zydeco, and community based news programs—program formats that would not be featured at commercial stations. WPFW expresses its mission as "to provide outlets for the creative skills and energies of the community, to contribute to a lasting understanding between individuals of all nations, races, creeds and colors, and to promote the full distribution of public information."[56] WPFW is primarily concerned with serving the local community, with a particular focus on underserved populations and communities. Lewis Hill, one of the founders of the Pacifica Network, centered his community radio model on the ideal that "the volunteer staff does not constitute cheap labor, but an extension of the listening community itself."[57] Other than a small number of paid administrative staff, WPFW on-air talent, hosts, and staff are all volunteers.

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[55] David K. Dunaway, "Pacifica Radio and Community Broadcasting," *Journal of Radio Studies* 12, no. 2 (November 2005): 243, http://heinonline.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jradstud12&collection=journals&id=244.

[56] "Our Mission," WPFW 89.3, http://www.wpfwfm.org/radio/about-us/our-mission.

[57] Dunaway, "Pacifica Radio," 243.

V. Sounds Like Washington: Programming Authenticity and Strategy at WHUR, WKYS, and WPFW

In my interviews with professionals at the radio stations that are the focus for my study, I found that programmers at WPFW and WHUR are principally concerned with appeasing audiences rather than advertisers or generating other streams of revenue. Preservation of the station's heritage, personal connection to listeners, and specificity of programming were all major concerns to programmers. This section will discuss similarities in programming strategies at WPFW and WHUR before exploring WKYS' place within the larger Radio One conglomerate structure.

Heritage as a Brand

WHUR and WPFW first went on the air in 1971 and 1977 respectively. As noted previously, these two stations entered the D.C. media landscape at a time when the city began to cement its status as a hub of black culture and politics. As part of the stations' branding, programmers at these stations today draw upon their longevity and their roles in the black community over the past 40 years.

Brand equity is "both a financial asset and a set of favorable associations and behaviors."[58] While marketing can contribute to brand equity and value, for the most part consumers create and develop their own attitudes towards brands. Brand image, or "a consumer construct residing in an associative memory network that is critical to consumer decision

[58] James B. Faircloth, Louis M. Capella, and Bruce L. Alford, "The Effect of Brand Attitude and Brand Image on Brand Equity," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 9, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 62, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40470049.

making,"[59] contributes to brand equity and the ultimate success of the product. The radio stations in my study brand themselves by creating associations and meanings between consumers (listeners) and products (radio programming). WHUR's historicity and affiliation with Howard University are key aspects of its brand image—a historic media outlet central to black life in Washington. As part of the greater Howard University brand, WHUR has certain meanings and values associated with it. A tenet of WHUR's programming vision states the station's commitment to "Consistently representing Howard University, the DMV, and ourselves in a professional and positive manner."[60] By connecting Howard's legacy and prestige to the radio station, WHUR's programming fosters strong brand equity among listeners.

Hector Hannibal, the director of programming for WHUR-FM, refers to the station as a heritage station, alluding not only to its age but also to its association with Howard University. Hannibal, commenting on the importance of the station's heritage on its listener base, shared,

> We believe that for the longevity of the radio station, we have to have an influx of listeners for a younger demo who will grow up with us. A lot of our demo has, over the years, grown up with us and now they're actually growing out of the demo. So we have a lot of seventy year olds and a lot of sixty year olds who love the radio station because, you know, 30 years ago, they were in that demo that we're looking for so they grew up with the radio station.[61]

As indicated above, one of WHUR's most popular programs, *The Quiet Storm*, first went on the air in 1976. A brainchild of Howard student and WHUR programmer, Melvin Lindsey, *The Quiet Storm* radio format featured hours of R&B slow jams that quickly became popular amongst the new black middle class. Hector Hannibal notes that the station's current Nielsen ratings point to *The Quiet Storm* as still one of its most successful and popular programs. In a

[59] Faircloth, Capella, and Alford, "The Effect," 64.
[60] Hector Hannibal, interview by the author, Washington, DC, December 27, 2016.
[61] Hannibal, interview by the author.

1986 article, Melvin Lindsey describes *Quiet Storm* as, "a way to play mellow R&B music that appeals to a more upscale audience but that is still gutsy enough for those who like downhome music."[62] A modern-day listener described her relationship and affinity to *The Quiet Storm* on WHUR in a 2013 study:

> I'll cut on the *Quiet Storm* and just drive around DC...You get the full effect. It's a little different than sitting in the house...there's a tag that goes, 'WHUR Sounds Like Washington.' That, that is a tag, but whoever came up with that was a very, very astute person, simply because the identification, the two are almost inseparable. I feel like I'm home. I feel a sense of kinship.[63]

By embracing long-running programs such as *The Quiet Storm*, WHUR uses its heritage to build brand meaning and foment feelings of nostalgia among listeners. The show's namesake in and of itself is a reference to a classic oldies throwback, Smokey Robinson's 1975 Motown album, *A Quiet Storm*. Comprised of smooth and soulful ballads, the scholar Mark Anthony Neal describes the album as "the aesthetic cornerstone of a more upscale and sophisticated soul sound that would captivate an older, mature, and largely black middle-class that relished its distance from a deteriorating urban landscape."[64] The album cover features a softened image of Robinson in a woodland setting with a grazing pony in the background. This image came to embody post-civil rights fantasies and aesthetics of black middle-classness wherein the black body has established significant distance from the blighted urban area—exemplifying middle-class aesthetics in a woodland setting.

Quiet storm programming provided a stark contrast to the disco, funk, and soul programming that dominated commercially oriented urban contemporary radio stations during

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[62] Nelson, George. "Quiet Storm Sweeps Black Radio." *Billboard*, October 4, 1986.
[63] Antoinette Carter Jenkins, "An Exploration of the Relationship Between a Black-Owned Radio Station's Organizational Culture and its Social Impact" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2014), 57, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1524023505.
[64] Neal, Mark Anthony. *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 127.

that era. While popular black artists at the time such as Parliament Funkadelic, James Brown, and Curtis Mayfield sang about urban life, black empowerment, and afrofuturism, most artists that were played during quiet storm programs avoided any significant involvement with themes of race. At the time that Quiet Storm emerged, the black community in Washington, D.C. was highly politicized, with many radio DJs referring to Washington as "The Chocolate City"—a nod to its status as a majority black city. The scholar Brian Ward writes, "lower class blacks tended to go for darker funk tones, deep soul classics and later for the rap stylings which spoke more directly to their functionally segregated and disadvantaged black lives."[65]

Mark Anthony Neal writes that quiet storm recordings were, in most cases, "devoid of any significant political commentary and maintained a strict aesthetic and narrative distance from issues related to black urban life."[66] Thus, as upwardly mobile blacks gained the means to distance themselves geographically from urban environments and urban issues, they sought radio programming that would do the same. The quiet storm format recalls a time when Howard's image was built on ideals of black exceptionalism and prestige. While the program features contemporary music, the songs still are low-key, almost ambient.

[65] King, Jason. "The Sound of Velvet Melting: The Power of Vibe in the Work of Roberta Flack." In *Listen Again: A Momentary History of Pop Music*, edited by Eric Weisbard, 172-98. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. 181.
[66] Neal, *What the Music, 128*.

Erykah Badu - 'Otherside Of The Game'
The Internet - 'Girl'
Levert/gerald Levert - 'Pop Pop Pop Goes My Mind'
Eric Roberson/lalah Hathaway - 'Dealing'
George Duke - 'No Rhyme No Reason'
Blue Magic - 'Spell'
Rick James/smokey Robinson - 'Ebony Eyes'
Will Downing - 'The Blessing'
Patti Austin - 'I Just Want To Know'
Luther Vandross/martha Washington - 'I Who Have Nothing'

WHUR *Quiet Storm* playlist, March 10th, 2017

The above songs, played on a March 10th, 2017 broadcast of *The Quiet Storm*, represent a typical playlist for the show. All of these songs could be classified as "slow jams": down tempo R&B songs dealing with subjects of intimacy, emotions, and interpersonal relationships. Often, programmers and artists characterize the Quiet Storm genre as background music—existing to set the mood rather than share a message. In addition to the race-neutral themes of Quiet Storm genre music, "quiet storm's sluggish tempos, monotonous grooves, and dulcet decibel levels suggested lounge complacency."[67] This listener's anecdote, as well as the nationwide popularity of the program, suggests that part of *The Quiet Storm*'s appeal comes from its longevity and historical connectedness to black middle class life. In 1970, about 25% of the black population in the Washington metropolitan area lived in the suburbs, with that figure almost doubling to 47% percent by 1980, and reaching 83% by 2000.[68] Washington, D.C. provided near perfect

[67] King, Jason. "The Sound of Velvet Melting: The Power of Vibe in the Work of Roberta Flack." In *Listen Again: A Momentary History of Pop Music*, edited by Eric Weisbard, 172-98. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. 182.
[68] Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black*, 44-45.

conditions for Quiet Storm radio to emerge. The confluence of Howard University, the abundance of well-paying government jobs for blacks, and the movement of upwardly mobile blacks to the suburbs with purchasing power helped to create a niche, which quiet storm radio helped to fill and still occupies to this day. Hannibal notes that while WHUR's general demographic is 25-54 year olds, he tends to focus his programming on the 39-49 demographic. WHUR's content and brand identity reflects this strategy. By airing programs that appeal to black middle class aesthetics and drawing on the legacy of Howard University, WHUR draws in listeners through nostalgia and prestige.

WPFW also creates brand image through its association with the Pacifica Network. Founded in 1977, WPFW has long branded itself as progressive and innovative. Station manager Jerry Paris spoke of the implications of WPFW's heritage on its present-day identity.

> WPFW went on the air in 1977 and that was the heyday of Washington, D.C. as a center of African-American culture. We have the nickname "Chocolate City" here. I believe at that time the reality was that in Washington, D.C., we had the highest concentration of people of African descent in the world outside of Africa. So, it was a very significant population here for WPFW to serve and WPFW was much needed as an outlet. Now, with the changing and the gentrification of D.C., and the whole economic evolution of D.C.—because D.C. used to be considered a sleepy Southern town. Now D.C. is a raging metropolis if you will. There is nothing slow and sleepy about D.C. anymore. And the older generations have a hard time keeping up. And this is the same disconnect, if you will, that older people have with technology, with culture. We tend to be set in our ways and you have a certain nostalgia for the old days. So, one of the battles that we fight here at WPFW is adapting to the change of our environment, our demographic, but maintaining our identity. So what we're doing now is focusing on the value of the diversity here in Washington. [69]

Much of WPFW's programming invokes nostalgia for the "Chocolate City" that Paris describes. While WPFW is not labeled specifically as "Urban Oldies," its Saturday music programs heavily feature traditional jazz, soul, and funk music from the late 1950s to early 1990s on their playlists. The playlist for the January 14th, 2017 *Andrea Bray* show—a popular, long-

[69] Jerry Paris, interview by the author, Washington, DC, December 20, 2016.

running Saturday programming—embodies Motown sound (see below). Featuring artists such as The Marvelettes, Otis Redding, and Billy Mashburn, the show undeniably appeals to nostalgia and sentimentality.

The Andrea Bray Show for Saturday, January 14, 2017 - 4:00 PM

Artist	Song Title	Album	Label	Played
Show Start	Talk			04:00 PM
SEX MACHINE	JAMES BROWN			04:01 PM
				04:15 PM
EVERYTHING I DO GONNA BE FUNKY	LEE DORSEY			04:17 PM
LOVE BONES	JOHNNY TAYLOR			04:21 PM
HAPPY SONG	OTIS REDDING			04:23 PM
LOOK BACK AND SMILE	BILLY STEWART			04:26 PM
				04:26 PM
GIVE ME JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME	CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD			04:27 PM
SYNCOPATED CLOCK				04:30 PM
VOICE YOUR CHOICE	RADIENTS			04:32 PM
SEARCHING FOR MY LOVE	BOBBY MOORE			04:36 PM
DON'T IT SOUND GOOD	BILLY MASHBURN			04:37 PM
CHURCH BELLS MAY RING	THE WILLOWS			04:40 PM
THERE GOES	THE ENCHANTERS			04:42 PM
DEAR LORD	THE CONTINENTALS			04:45 PM
BABY OH BABY	THE SHELLS			04:48 PM
HEARTS DESIRE	THE AVALONS			04:51 PM
OH LITTLE GIRL OF MINE	THE CLEFTONES			04:54 PM
I FOUND OUT TOO LATE	JACKIE & THE STARLITES			04:57 PM
GOOD OLD DAYS	SKIP MAHONEY & THE CASUALS			05:00 PM
GROOVY PEOPLE	LEON HUFF			05:04 PM
CANDY GIRL	FOUR SEASONS			05:08 PM
THE GET CAPTURED BY THE GAME	THE MARVELETTES			05:10 PM
SAVE ME	THE MIRACLES			05:13 PM
ITS GONNA TAKE A MIRACLE	THE ROYALETTES			05:22 PM
ONLY WHEN YOUR LONELY	THE ROYALETTES			05:40 PM
				05:40 PM
DON'T PLAY THAT SONG	THE CLOVERS			05:43 PM
I HOW HAVE NOTHING	TOM JONES			05:47 PM
SPANISH HARLEM	LUCKY PETERSON			05:49 PM

WPFW playlist, *The Andrea Bray Show*. January 14th, 2017

Paris noted that WPFW's listeners generally skew older. He says that the majority of his listeners are sixty-five and older and reside in Prince George's county, a suburb of Washington with a large African-American population. By playing oldies on programs such as the *Andrea Bray Show*, the station establishes a relationship to its older listeners who may have a personal connection to music of the sixties and seventies.

Personalities and Personal Connection to Listeners

In addition to discussing their efforts to cultivate a brand identity for their stations, programmers interviewed also emphasized the relationship between on-air content and listeners as an important aspect of their station identity and operations. Both WPFW and WHUR programmers cited emotional connection to listeners and involvement in the D.C. community as key advantages they held over other stations.

Despite facing competition from internet radio and streaming services, Hector Hannibal believes that WHUR's connection to its listeners and greater Washington community truly sets it apart:

> Even though streaming has become more popular than it was and there are devices that people are using, you know, the connected car now is a big issue, radio is still—according to the research—very popular. Like, it's so far away from becoming you know, obsolete. We know that there's still something about radio and personalities that Pandora can't do, that even to a degree satellite radio doesn't do. It's this one-on-one connection, this emotional connection between announcers and their listeners. So what we've done is try to just keep that in mind and you forget about the competition to a degree.[70]

WHUR sees its on-air personalities as integral to establishing the connection between the station and its listeners.

> Personalities make the difference because, for the most part we all play the same music, except for some stations like an HUR might play songs that a PGC[71] won't play, an MMJ[72] won't play. But for the most part, the music is the same. The thing that sets it apart is the personality of the radio station. I have…so right now I have Triscina Gray on the air, [someone] who nobody else has so I am going to use that as the thing that sets me apart from my competitor. I have this personality. And, I hope that this personality is

[70] Hannibal, interview by the author.

[71] WPGC 95.5, a rhythmic contemporary station owned by CBS
[72] WMMJ 102.3, an oldies urban adult contemporary station owned by Radio One.

> connecting or we work to try to get her to connect. In the afternoons, I have an afternoon show that is high-energy, is up-tempo that my competitors don't have. That is my uniqueness. [73]

In contrast to WHUR, all of WPFW's programmers are unpaid volunteers. WPFW thinks of its programmers as curators rather than radio professionals; this perspective leads them to view programmers as having much more freedom regarding the content they air. Jerry Paris, WPFW's general manager, believes that his station's community-based radio model fosters quality.

> Almost 100% of our programming staff is volunteer. And what those volunteer programmers bring is unique music. They go through their collections – their private collections – and pick out the gems, music that they feel needs to be highlighted at the time. And quite often, we'll have programmers with music that wasn't commercially available so we have people calling all the time, "What did you just play? What is that? I've never heard that!" And you know, so, as opposed to the drone of continuous hits—there are occasions when you could be driving around in Washington and flipping through the stations and you'd find the same song played on all three of the major commercial stations. And people are looking for that relief, we are that relief.

Paris uses terminology such as "private collections" suggesting a degree of prestige and curation that he ties with the station. His views toward WPFW's programming reflect the viewpoint of radio as a public good—a way to educate and inform listeners rather than merely entertain. Hannibal and Paris' comments both imply a critical distinction that they see between their stations and others in the Washington radio landscape—originality. By emphasizing the uniqueness of their content and on air talent, Paris and Hannibal both view their stations as differentiated from other commercial stations. This distance from other radio stations also implies a degree of class distinction. Both Hannibal and Paris admit that their stations are geared towards a slightly older, educated audience. By airing "curated" and personalized content, WHUR and WPFW aim to create tasteful content that will appeal to these demographics.

[73] H. Hannibal interview.

A February 25th broadcast of *Roots and Fruits*, a Saturday afternoon blues show, exemplifies the "relief" that listeners find from commercial radio content. Hosted by Bill Wax, the program features new and classic blues music as well as context on the artists played. Below is an excerpt of the type of talk featured between the songs that are played:

> [Song: That's All Right]
>
> Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup here on WPFW's *Roots and Fruits* with a thing called "That's All Right, Mama," a tune that gets covered and becomes one of the earliest hits for Elvis Presley. Arthur Alexander with the original "You Better Move On" tune that I *loved* as a kid uhh, get's covered and becomes known by The Rolling Stones. Blind Willie McTell, that's the very original version of "Statesboro Blues," decades later the Almond Brothers come along and make it a whole different song. Bo Didley with his tune, "Pretty Thing," again another tune that the Rolling Stones cover later on. Smokey and the Miracles, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles doing the original version of "Tracks of My Tears," which becomes even a bigger hit, believe it or not, for Johnny Rivers when he covers it…that was an inconceivable thing to me in my mind. We start all that off with Buddy Johnson doing, "Pretty Girls, Cadillac, and Some Money," and we heard Washington, D.C's own Nighthawks with their version of that tune. Today's show on *Roots and Fruits* is "We Did 'Em First!" All these tunes that were originally done by African-American artists that eventually get covered, and for many of them become better known by the white artist that did the covers. But we're featuring the originators, NOT the imitators.[74]

Bill Wax typifies the concept of programmer as curator. By providing historical context on each song and seeking to remedy the erasure of black artists by the white musicians who covered them, Wax not only entertains, but also educates his audience. His weekly show, "*Roots and Fruits,*" features niche blues programming as well as information and background about the artists featured. Wax has long been a fixture in the blues enthusiast community, having formerly hosted Sirius XM's program, *B.B. King's Bluesville*. At the peak of Wax's time on *Bluesville,* the show had 3 million weekly listeners. A 35-year radio veteran, Wax left his post at Sirius for retirement but still offers a once-weekly show on WPFW. His commentary on the music

[74] *Roots and Fruits*, "We Did Em First!," WPFW, February 25, 2017, hosted by Bill Wax.

suggests not only knowledge, but passion. Wax's remarks suggest that his affinity lies with the blues and with blues artists.

As noted above, WPFW's community radio model means that the station is wholly listener supported. Several times a year, WPFW has on-air pledge drives where listeners call in and pledge donations. Programmers establish connections with their listeners by directly soliciting donations. Oftentimes during pledge drives at WPFW, programmers will give "shout-outs" to individuals who have donated. By directly involving listeners in the financial sustainability of the station, WPFW helps foster attitudes of ownership and pride among those listeners. Financial support of WPFW also earns listeners a role in the management and direction of the station. By donating $25 dollars or volunteering at least 3 total hours at the station, listeners are eligible to vote in the Local Station Board Elections.[75]

WPFW owner Pacifica Radio prides itself on its grassroots character and organization. In his book on the Pacifica Network, scholar Michael Lasar suggests that two philosophies have embodied the network's character, "one that emphasized humanist intercommunication, and another that championed the fundamental right of the individual to speak and to hear certain ideas."[76] By allowing curators and enthusiasts to serve as programmers and involving listeners in the station's government and organization, WPFW realizes Pacifica Radio's ideals.

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[75] Paris, interview by the author.

[76] Matthew Lasar, *Pacifica Radio: The Rise of An Alternative Network* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 229.

Tailored Audience, Tailored Programming

WHUR and WPFW both recognize that niche programming and specialized content are integral to their stations' respective identities. Building off the mission of the Pacifica Network, WPFW's programming seeks to address unmet needs in the community. Because WPFW holds a non-commercial radio license, its primary focus must be "educational programming." While the FCC largely leaves the requirements of "educational programming" undefined, WPFW's general manager, Jerry Paris, commented on what he sees that as meaning for the station:

> We have fairly specific programming. Both in our information programming and in our entertainment programming. One of the things that we try to do is be as fresh as possible. Again, in terms of information programming, we provide information that you're not going to get on commercial media. In terms of our entertainment, we have specific broadcasts that cater to specific genres of music. We've got a new Spanish-language initiative—shows that not only feature Latin music but the shows are broadcast in Spanish. And that is a Pacifica-wide initiative, but we jumped on that initiative and launched as soon as possible because we recognized there's a large Spanish-speaking community in the Washington area. We've got a Haitian programming. One of our news programs that, I think they just rolled out of here today, it's a program for the LGBTQ community. You know, NOTHING like it on the radio. We have a labor program that addresses labor rights and issues—again, nothing like it in the area. So, we kind of look for the holes you know, for what is not being covered and we make it our mission to make sure there is that coverage and that voice.

WPFW's programming model centers around narrowcasting, or aiming content at a very specific segment of the population. Paris admits that while WPFW's listener base is not very large, he believes that the quality and specificity of the programming drives listeners to make pledges. Paris also stated that WPFW serves "a higher mission than money," suggesting a critical distinction between commercial and non-commercial radio. Much of WPFW's weekday daytime programming deals with social justice issues directly relating to Washington. WPFW's weekday scheduling grid illustrates its commitment to the "justice" component of its tag line.

8:00 AM 8:30 AM		Democracy Now! *Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez*	Democracy Now! *Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez*	Democracy Now! *Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez*	Democracy Now! *Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez*	Democracy Now! *Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez*	
9:00 AM 9:30 AM	G-Strings *Tom Cole*	Business Matters *Andy Shallal*	Voices With Vision *Netfa Freeman*	What's At Stake *Verna Avery Brown*	On The Margin *Josephine Reed & Giovanni Russonello*	Arise! *Bill Fletcher*	
10:00 AM 10:30 AM		To Heal DC *Joni Eisenberg*	Crossroads *Roach Brown*	In Our Voices *Nkenge Toure*	The Collision: Sports and Politics *Etan Thomas & Dave Zirin*	On The Ground *Esther Iverem*	House Of Soul *James Funk & Lance Reynolds*
11:00 AM 11:30 AM		Community Watch & Comment - Monday *Gloria Minott*	Community Watch & Comment - Tuesday *David Rabin*	Community Watch & Comment - Wednesday *David Whettstone*	Community Watch & Comment - Thursday *Jamila Bey*	Community Watch & Comment - Friday *Gloria Minott*	
12:00 Noon 12:30 PM	Sunday Kind Of Love *Miyuki Williams*	Don't Forget the Blues - Elliott Gross *Elliott Gross*	Don't Forget The Blues - Scooter Magruder *Scooter Magruder*	Don't Forget The Blues - Steve Hoffman *Steve Hoffman*	Don't Forget The Blues - Chris Deproperty *Chris Deproperty*	Don't Forget The Blues - Ida Campbell *Ida Campbell*	Roots and Fruits *Bill Wax*
1:00 PM 1:30 PM		TBD *TBD*	Taking Action *Parisa Norouzi*	AfricaNow! *Mwiza Munthali*	Your Rights at Work *Chris Garlock, with Ed Smith*	Latino Media Collective	
2:00 PM 2:30 PM	American Songbook *Donnie McKethan*	To Your Health *Dr. Ted Watkins*	Inside Out *The Collective*	Shay wa Nana *Zein El-Amine*	emPower Hour *DeShuna Spencer*	The NightWolf Show *Jay Winter Nightwolf*	Southern Soul Rumpin' *Dr. Nick & Lady C*
3:00 PM 3:30 PM		Jazz and Justice - African Deep Thought Edition *Ka'Ba'*	Jazz & Justice – District Timba Edition *Darwin Peña & Mimi Machado*	Jazz and Justice - Sophie's Parlor Edition *Helen Viksnins*	Jazz and Justice - Pa'Lante Edition *Daniel Del Pielago*	Jazz and Justice - Fantastic Friday Edition *Bobby Rox*	
4:00 PM	Sound of Surprise *Larry Appelbaum*						The Andrea Bray Show *Scooter Magruder & Beverly Lindsay-Johnson*

WPFW weekly scheduling grid

Apart from the syndicated program *Democracy Now*, the vast majority of WPFW's 8 AM to 5 PM weekday programming is community focused and hosted by local community members. The host of the Monday morning program, *Business Matters*, is Andy Shallal, a fixture in the

business community of Washington. Shallal owns the popular local franchise, Busboys and Poets, a group of restaurants with bookstores and performance spaces that have a social-justice mission. Mwiza Munthali, host of the show, *AfricaNow!*, is a Malawian activist based in D.C. whose show discusses issues facing Africans and African immigrants to the United States. Another show, *Shay wa Nana*, focuses specifically on issues around Middle Eastern politics and culture. WPFW's diverse and specific program grid suggests that while the station's primary listener base is African-American, it aims to appeal to traditionally underrepresented communities in Washington. The specificity of WPFW's daytime programs suggests a firm commitment to "community radio." By providing a space for community leaders and figures to reach out to traditionally underrepresented and under-reached populations, WPFW establishes itself as a home for niche interests and ideas.

Jacqui Gales Webb, who hosts a Sunday afternoon gospel program on WHUR, describes her job as a programmer to, "curate good gospel music and to stay involved in the community as far as religious and social activities."[77] Webb also views her program and WHUR as distinctive within the Washington black radio landscape.

> The fact that it is...owned and operated by Howard University is a plus in a world where all of the other...radio stations that are programming to the Black community, if they're not public, they're owned by one of the big conglomerates, you know, Clear Channel, Radio One, Cumulus, and...more and more you see stand-alone radio stations like HUR being eaten up by these giants, and the problem with that is, you know, there, there are advantages to being in a conglomeration like that, but you lose that local control if you're in aconglomerate and you're...and the people who are running you are located in another city, not yours, you lose the local connection. You, you lose, for example, I try to play as many good local artists in my gospel program as possible. You know...the...syndicated, uh gospel radio stations where it's one program director, they tend to not play a lot of the local artists who are in the, the local stations. They stick with the top 40 playlist, you know? So, that...has been another benefit for me is hearing from the local artists how much they appreciate the fact that they do get airplay on WHUR and they are very...the ones that

[77] Jenkins, "An Exploration," 49.

I play are very good. Yeah. [78]

Both Webb and Hannibal's comments suggest a certain level of pride associated with not being part of a media conglomerate. Webb suggests that WHUR's independence allows a more intimate connection with listeners and more control over the content she airs.

WHUR and WPFW both utilize content and on-air talent to appeal to their target audiences. Both stations target older African-American audiences (34 and older), who might aim to distance themselves literally and physically from younger urban audiences. Hannibal and Paris both noted that their primary listener base is outside of D.C. city limits in Prince George's County, an area with a significant black population. As exemplified by *The Quiet Storm* program, content on these stations (both urban *adult* contemporary formatted) has a distinct sound and identity, which emphasizes curation and personalization over popular appeal. By playing unique content and involving DJs and programmers actively in broadcast, WHUR and WPFW establish an emotional and personal connection with the communities they aim to reach.

The Radio One Empire

Cathy Hughes' name commands respect in Washington. Hughes began her career as a single mother working at Howard's WHUR as the General Sales Manager. She went on to build what is now the largest black-owned broadcasting company in the United States from scratch. Since 1980, her company, Radio One, has not only come to define black radio in Washington,

[78] Jenkins, "An Exploration," 52.

but also black media nationally with holdings that include 55 radio stations, cable television, and digital media.

Similar to WPFW and WHUR, Radio One grew out of a desire to serve the black community of Washington. In the 1970s, Cathy Hughes was a young single-mother working for Howard's radio station, WHUR. As previously noted, she helped to develop the Quiet Storm radio format at WHUR, popularizing the station among black middle class listeners. Hughes went on to purchase WOL-AM in 1980, starting what would become the Radio One empire. Under her ownership, Hughes shifted WOL-AM's focus away from "urban music"—funk, soul, R&B—to include programs focused on African-American culture, politics, and events. Seven years later, Hughes purchased WMMJ, changing the station from easy listening to Urban Oldies, and, for the first time, turning a profit.[79]

Radio One did not truly begin to hit its stride until after the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which removed limits on how many stations in a particular market a company could own. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Radio One began to expand its reach beyond the Washington, D.C. landscape. Its acquisitions strategy for the past 20 years has remained largely the same: find under-performing low-power stations in metropolitan areas, purchase them for a small cost, and reformat programming formats to target black listeners.[80] Currently, Radio One has station holdings in almost all large urban markets with significant black populations with the exception of New York and Chicago. Targeted mainly towards

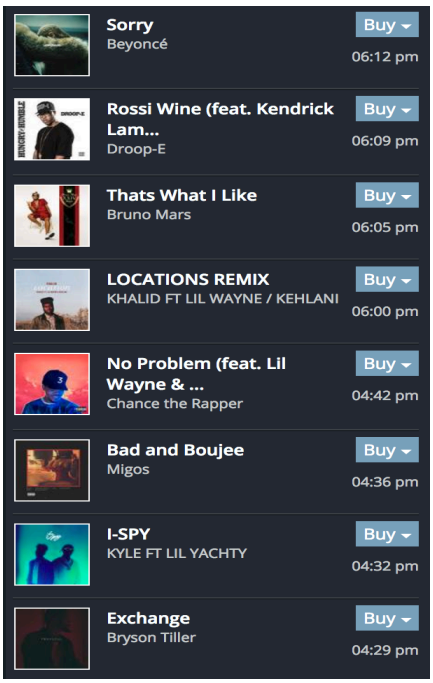
[79] Barlow, *Voice Over*, 271.
[80] Clea Simon, "Mining an Untapped Market, Radio One Becomes a Force," *The New York Times*, December 25, 2000, http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/25/business/mining-an-untapped-market-radio-one-becomes-a-force.html.

African-American listeners, Radio One's stations employ a variety of formats including gospel, urban contemporary, urban adult contemporary, and talk.

One of the company's five holdings in Washington D.C., WKYS was sold to Radio One in 1995 for 34 million dollars.[81] Under Hughes' direction, the station evolved from primarily disco-oriented to its current urban contemporary format. Presently, Nielsen Audio ranks WKYS 14th in the D.C. area based on the station's AQH share, behind WHUR which is ranked 3rd in the market.[82]

Almost immediately after my interview with WKYS' programming director, Neke Howse, began, it was apparent that the station's approach to radio as a medium was vastly different from that of WHUR and WPFW. When asked what she viewed as the station's brand, or core value, Howse responded, "We are everything. The one-stop-shop for hip-hop and R&B in Washington, D.C."[83] Regarding her programming process, Howse noted, "I just think about hits, what our listeners want to hear, artists that our listeners like."[84] Howse's sentiments suggest that rather than trying to introduce listeners to new music, as WPFW host Bill Wax does, Howse draws on established hits in making her schedule. A playlist from April 5th, 2017 illustrates programming typical to the station:

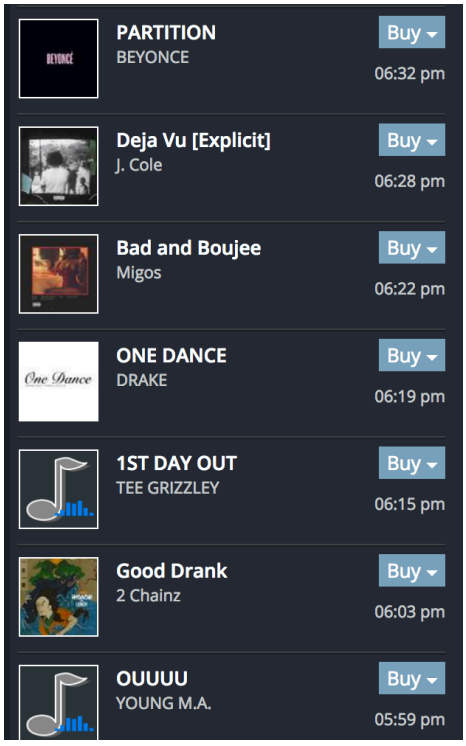
[81] Jeffrey Yorke, "Area Firm to Purchase WKYS-FM," *The Washington Post*, November 1, 1994, Web.
[82] "WASHINGTON, DC RADIO," table.
[83] Howse, telephone interview by the author.
[84] Howse, telephone interview by the author.



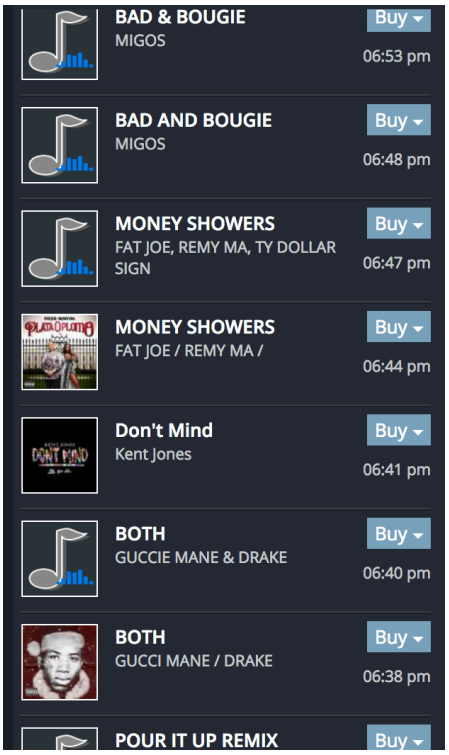
WPFW playlist, April 5th, 2017

That week, both "Bad and Boujee" and "That's What I Like" were atop the Billboard rap and R&B charts respectively, with the rest of the songs among the Top 40 slots on their charts. While occasionally the playlists will mix in relatively older music such as Jodeci, Babyface or Lauryn Hill, songs by these artists get labeled as "throwbacks" or used only to bridge segments.

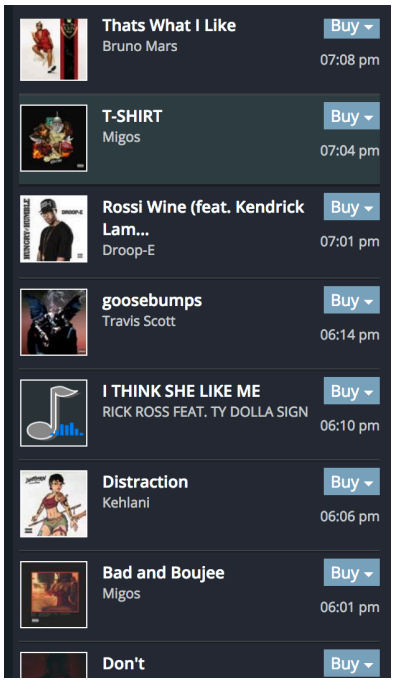
Playlists from Radio One's urban contemporary stations suggest that WKYS' strategy of peppering Top 40 hits with local music and personalities is not unique. Three weekday playlists from stations in Detroit, Charlotte, and Washington reflect this:



107.5 playlist, April 4th, 2017 (Detroit)



92.7 playlist, April 4th, 2017 (Charlotte, NC)



93.9 WKYS playlist, April 4th, 2017

These playlists, all from urban contemporary format stations owned by Radio One, show little variation in content or sound. All feature songs by popular recording artists with chart topper "Bad and Boujee" playing in the 6-7 time slot for all three. The slogans for all three also are eerily similar: 107.5, YOUR station for new hip hop and R&B; 92.7 The Block, Charlotte's Non-Stop Hip Hop and R&B station; 93.9, D.C.'s #1 for Interactive Hip Hop and R&B. The slogans suggest attempts to make the corporate seem local, to give their target communities a sense of ownership and personal connection to each station.

While the playlists suggest that Radio One's urban contemporary stations follow a set of corporate guidelines for their schedules, each station also attempts to make certain, explicit connections with local listeners. For example, for the most part, WKYS and other Radio One stations use local DJs who are involved in the community. In addition to serving as on-air

personalities, DJs also host events at local clubs, concerts, and community events. For example, Shorty Da Prince, who DJs the 7-12pm weekday time slot, hosted an open mic on March 24th 2017 for local artists. Additionally, WKYS DJs often do promotions and ticket giveaways for D.C. area concerts for artists like Trey Songz, Young Ma, and Chris Brown.

Radio One stations also attempt to incorporate local music into program schedules. WKYS broadcasts around 5 hours of go-go music each week, the most of any black station in D.C.[85] When asked about the role of go-go in the station's programming, Howse replied, "Go-go represents D.C; D.C. is go-go. We have to embrace it."[86] On weekdays between 9:30 and 10pm, D.C. go-go fixture, "Big John," hosts a go-go program called, *The Crank Session*. The program features music and mixes by D.C. based go-go legends such as Rare Essence, the Junkyard Band, and EU (Experience Unlimited). In addition, Big John plays music by emerging go-go artists to give them exposure.

Go-go's name is a nod to its distinctive beat: an up-tempo layering of percussion, vocal chants and syncopated rhythms that goes on and on without necessarily stopping or starting. Melding funk, soul, R&B, and hip-hop, go-go emerged in the seventies as a genre incredibly rooted in D.C. Former boxer-turned musician Chuck Brown has largely been credited with establishing the go-go scene in D.C. As the city's black population peaked in 1970 at over 70%, go-go became the unofficial soundtrack to black life in the city, with neighborhood youth forming improvised go-go bands and blaring music from boom boxes and car windows. With its "percolating percussion patterns, call-and-response chants, rump-shaking party mood, and the

[85] Chris Richards, "How long can go-go keep going?," *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2015
[86] Howse, telephone interview by the author.

bandleader's engaging personality" go-go music helped create a lively and energetic live-music and party scene within D.C. Go-go's characteristic beat that went on and on, "served an important function in financially depressed areas of D.C." Go-go was D.C's quintessential party music and encouraged its listeners and audiences to "bust loose" and "get funky" in the midst of the War on Drugs and Reagan-era politics that devastated huge swaths of the Washington black community.[87] Today, go-go's signature beat contains the cultural legacy of black D.C. at its zenith. Go-go is an essentially black and an essentially D.C. art form, engendering not only nostalgia but also respect among modern listeners.

While go-go has been a Washington fixture since its emergence in the seventies, the popularity and the vitality of the local scene has fluctuated in subsequent decades. A 2015 *Washington Post* survey of go-go musicians, DJs, managers, and promoters found that 55% of those surveyed agreed that the local go-go scene was not in good shape. Established go-go acts have enjoyed heightened visibility in the past few years. For example, in 2015, Trouble Funk opened for the Foo Fighters and Rare Essence played in official South by Southwest showcases. However, emerging go-go artists in Washington often struggle to carve out space for themselves in the local go-go scene. As a result of gentrification and soaring property values, many go-go venues have either closed or been relegated to suburbs. Most young artists seek private parties and small lounges to perform at, finding that the go-go scene has been relegated from a mainstream scene to an underground one. Go-go concerts, which gained a reputation for

[87] Alona Wartofsky, "Go-Go Music: The Sound of a City," in *Pump Me Up: DC subCulture of the 1990s*, comp. Roger Gastman, et al. (Washington: R. Rock Enterprises, 2013), 182-190.

violence and unruly behavior, resulted in tighter policing and subsequently fewer performances.[88]

Despite its cultural and commercial endangerment, go-go remains an essential asset to Washington, D.C's cultural capital. At South by Southwest in 2015, the D.C. Economic Council hosted several go-go showcases in hopes of attracting tech firms to Washington.[89] However, go-go remains an intensely regional genre, strongly tied to Washington, D.C.'s black community and identity. By incorporating go-go music into its mostly Top 40 programming, Radio One attempts to capitalize on go-go's significance to D.C. and tailor their corporate brand to an individual community.

Analysis of other urban contemporary stations under Radio One's umbrella, however, suggests that this strategy of turning to go-go music is not unique. For instance, Radio One's Detroit station, HOT 107.5, hosts an event called the "Friday Night Cypher," where local artists compete in a live-recorded freestyle competition. The on-air battles, which take up the 9pm-12am time slot, give artists invaluable exposure and airtime. Big Sean, a Grammy-nominated recording artist, got his start on the Friday Night Cypher.[90] Additionally, the station often promotes and plays music by local artists and takes mixtape submissions.

Similar to its acquisitions strategy, Radio One's urban contemporary programming strategy seems largely formulaic: 1) Play chart toppers; 2) use local DJs; 3) promote and

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[88] Richards, "How long,"

[89] Chris Richards, "D.C.'s Rare Essence becomes the first go-go band to play at SXSW," *The Washington Post*, March 18, 2015

[90] Eric Lacy, "From Sean Michael Anderson to Big Sean: Rap phenom's rise in Detroit," MLive, last modified December 1, 2012, http://www.mlive.com/entertainment/detroit/index.ssf/2012/12/big_sean_makes_lasting_impact.html.

integrate local music into the programming schedule. While the formats and content of Radio One's urban contemporary stations are largely the same, the company does a good job of tailoring programming and personalities to the individual markets. Despite being a corporate station that is part of a large media conglomerate, WKYS still has a strong regional brand, largely due to its embrace of go-go and promotion of local artists.

Chapter VI: What's Next for Radio?

As satellite radio, the connected car and music streaming services grow in popularity and availability, terrestrial radio faces increasingly distracted and divided audiences. Advertisers have ever increasing options to reach potential consumers and audiences have more options than ever for consuming content. All of the programmers that I interviewed acknowledged the changing media landscape to some degree, with attitudes ranging from nonchalance to anxiety over threats to terrestrial radio.

Jerry Paris, general manager at WPFW, views streaming and internet webcasting as essential to the longevity of WPFW and actively integrates these modes of distribution into how he conceptualizes programming strategies.

> Podcasting, podcasting, podcasting. We now podcast our talk shows, we're not able to podcast our music shows because we have licensing and rights issues. That and streaming. I've been on record pushing the issue of streaming because we're talking about appliances ultimately here in terms of the receiver, the listening receiver. Fewer and fewer people own radios. Everyone is listening on smartphones, tablets, and PCs, even in cars they have their devices Bluetooth connected. So, in terms of developing technologies, streaming over the internet is one of the highest priorities right now. We are streaming 24/7 but we will be adding additional streams and we just recently started podcasting our talk and information shows with very good results. They track…we look at the listenership on the streams and they track very closely to the tracking that you see terrestrially and we anticipate that that tracking will exceed terrestrial broadcasting in the very very very near future. [91]

Podcasting and streaming are audience friendly mediums, offering increased flexibility and choice for listeners. A 2017 Edison Research study found that 67 million people in the U.S. have listened to podcasts in the past month with 65% of those listening on a smartphone or tablet.[92] Satellite radio in particular poses a threat to stations like WPFW because of their niche offerings

[91] Paris, interview by the author.
[92] Edison Research and Triton Digital, *The Infinite Dial 2017*, March 10, 2017, http://www.edisonresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-Infinite-Dial-2017.pdf.

of specific genres and lack of ad breaks. Sirius XM, which currently has over 30 million subscribers, offers entire channels devoted to blues, bluegrass, reggae and soul. Bill Wax, the host of *Roots and Fruits*, worked for Sirius' blues station before coming to WPFW. While WPFW weekend programmers craft carefully curated playlists each week, listeners have an unprecedented number of options for discovering new music. Services like Spotify and Pandora thoughtfully tailor music to listeners using algorithms, allowing users to have almost unlimited new music suggestions.

Paris discussed streaming and podcasting as ways not only to keep up with the changing radio landscape, but also to reach listeners beyond the Washington, D.C. market. WPFW currently broadcasts at 50,000 watts, which allows it to reach listeners in the Washington metro, Baltimore, and Northern Virginia markets. However, streaming and podcasting allows the station to reach viewers almost anywhere in the world. Because WPFW's revenue structure is based largely on listener donations, it is in the station's best interest to reach as many listeners, fans, and potential donors as possible. As such, WPFW still faces the same issues as commercial radio stations—how to tap into local audiences and scale up profitably in the age of a saturated media landscape. Radio, particularly community radio, is a localized medium, often allowing listeners to connect with localities through place. As much as it poses certain challenges in terms its threat to terrestrial radio, online streaming also presents WPFW with valuable opportunities to expand its listenership and keep pace with changing content delivery models.

Significantly, not all radio stations are feeling the heat from streaming and podcasts. Hector Hannibal, the programming director at WHUR, acknowledged that while he is worried about his aging listenership and would like to attract a younger crop of listeners, he doesn't see his station going anywhere anytime soon.

> Even though streaming has become more popular than it was and there are devices that people are using, you know the connected car now is a big issue, radio is still according to the research very popular. Like, it's so far away from becoming obsolete. We know that there's something about radio and personalities that Pandora can't do, that, even to a degree satellite radio doesn't do, it's this one-on-one connection between announcers and their listeners. So, what we've done is just try to keep that in mind and forget about the competition to a degree. I can't worry about what satellite is gonna do, they have much more freedom to do things that I can't do. I can't worry about you know, is someone going to be changing and switching to Pandora. People have habits and they're going to do their habits. I wanna keep you as long as I can, I want you to come back as often as you can, so it's really simple.[93]

Hannibal doesn't worry about internet radio and streaming, possibly, because he doesn't have to. Despite growing penetration and popularity of streaming and satellite, terrestrial radio still has incredible market penetration and reach. A 2016 Nielsen report found that radio reaches 93% of adult consumers compared with smartphones, which reach 77%, and internet-connected PCs, which reach 51%.[94] Radio remains popular because it is accessible. While podcasts and streaming services require an internet connected device or a subscription, a radio receiver can be purchased for as little as ten dollars and are standard to all cars.

Minorities remain heavy consumers of radio, with blacks and Latinos listening on average to 13 hours per week of radio.[95] Despite an increasingly saturated auditory media environment, the number of black and Hispanic terrestrial radio listeners has grown in the past five years. Radio is the leading reach platform among blacks and Hispanics, overtaking television, smartphones, and internet.[96] This reality is likely attributable to two factors: accessibility and specificity. Because radio does not require a costly internet or television subscription, it is more accessible to listeners, particularly blacks and Hispanics who tend to have

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[93] Hannibal, interview by the author.
[94] Nielsen, comp, *State of the Media: Audio Today*, 3, February 25, 2016, http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2016/audio-today-radio-2016-appealing-far-and-wide.html.
[95] Nielsen, *State of the Media*, 9.
[96] Nielsen, comp., *Audio Today: A Focus on Black and Hispanic Audiences*, 2, September 20, 2016, http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2016/audio-today-focus-on-black-and-hispanic-audiences.html.

lower incomes than the general population. Additionally, specific station formats such as Mexican Regional and Urban Contemporary build rapport with minority communities and help foster a loyal listener base.

Terrestrial radio operates under a much more sustainable business model than new technologies, particularly given the threats to free and open internet policy. WPFW rents its tower for approximately $38,000 dollars per year. Combined with utility costs, licensing fees for music, and maintenance costs, its total programming expenditures run approximately $215,000 per year.[97] For this cost, WPFW reaches about 6 million listeners in the DC metro area. While the barriers to entry for podcast and streaming producers are much lower, these broadcasters have to spend more on servers and bandwidth as more listeners tune in as well as marketing to gain exposure for their content. The cost of broadcasting radio is fixed whereas the cost of running streams is incremental—the more people stream content, the more it costs to send out the data packets. Terrestrial radio allows a hypothetically unlimited number of listeners within a geographic region to tune in to a station for the fixed price of the signal transmission.[98] Simply put, it is nearly impossible for podcasters and streamers to reach the same number of people as terrestrial radio without incurring huge data costs.

Still, terrestrial radio stations like WPFW, WHUR, and WKYS face very real challenges. iHeartMedia (former Clear Channel), which is the largest radio station conglomerate in the country, is currently racked with over $20 billion in debt after struggling to turn profits at its 850

[97] "PACIFICA FOUNDATION WPFW 2012 FY BUDGET," table, WPFW, http://wpfwfm.org/radio/images/stories/Financials/pacifica2012wpfwbudgetpnbapprvd.pdf.
[98] Seth Stevenson, "Don't Count AM/FM Radio Out Just Yet," *Slate*, December 14, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/ten_years_in_your_ears/2014/12/the_future_of_terrestrial_radio_in_the_age_of_podcasts.html.

radio stations.[99] The stock price for Radio One, the company that owns WKYS, now hovers around three dollars compared to its IPO value at $24 per share. Borrowing heavily to increase its online footprint and broadcast licenses, the company was $765 million in debt by the Great Recession of 2008.[100] The company, which swept up dozens of stations in the aftermath of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, sold stations in less profitable markets in the late aughts as a way of reducing debt and raising revenue. This strategy proved successful for the company, allowing it to turn a profit again by 2009. However, the fact remains that commercial terrestrial radio stations compete for an ever-shrinking slice of the pie with regard to advertising dollars. In a given market, such as Washington, a station like WKYS not only has to compete with other urban contemporary radio stations, but also Spotify, Pandora, and streaming.

Despite freedom from advertising revenue, non-commercial radio has also felt the financial crunch in recent years. Independent and non-commercial stations have been dwarfed in recent years by NPR, which declared in 2010 that the "R" no longer stands for radio. What started off as an alternative radio network has now ballooned into a national powerhouse with over 900 stations in its national syndicate. In recent years, NPR has moved away from reliance on pledge drives and federal money for revenue. Today, NPR attracts corporate sponsors to its increasingly growing and loyal audience. This model allows NPR to produce and distribute high-production value programs such as *Serial* and *All Things Considered* while still maintaining the public radio image of no direct advertising.[101]

So, what does NPR's success mean for stations like much more locally oriented stations

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[99] Lucas Shaw and Laura J. Keller, "Private Equity's IHeart Radio Chokes on Debt Load It Can't Repay," Bloomberg Technology, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-02-04/private-equity-s-iheart-radio-chokes-on-debt-load-it-can-t-repay.

[100] "Radio One moves to shore up stock value," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/radio-one-moves-to-shore-up-stock-value.

[101] Peter Kafka, "NPR CEO Vivian Schiller Live at D8: There's a Reason We're Not Called National Public Radio Anymore," All Things D, last modified June 2, 2010, http://allthingsd.com/20100602/vivian-schiller-session/.

like WPFW? NPR's rise and ongoing success has pushed Pacifica stations to the margins of community radio. Despite its origins as an alternative radio station, NPR is now a "corporate" powerhouse with nationally syndicated programs, corporate sponsors, podcasts, apps, and over 34 million listeners. Pacifica stations like WPFW never saw the need to "professionalize" like NPR did. Unlike NPR, which hires seasoned radio veterans and journalists as program hosts and commentators, the vast majority of Pacifica's staff are volunteers, allowing personalities to sometimes take precedence over professionalism.

For the past decade, Pacifica stations have been rife with internal conflict and politics. While local station boards and volunteer-based staff foment the production of democratically produced content, they also create lots of room for disagreement and prioritization of the personal over the pragmatic. David Dunaway characterizes Pacifica's conflicts as longstanding tensions between two camps within the network, with "broadcasters committed to airing a unique left-wing ideological perspective and emergent radio professionals trying to manage stations in five of the nation's largest markets." For example, in 1976, volunteers at WBAI in New York City locked themselves in the station for six weeks after a new program director and general manager tried to shift the station's format away from community talk radio to feature more Latin music.[102] Pacifica historian Max Lasar writes, "As time progressed, the Pacifica Foundation's dissent culture overdispersed itself, inadequately substituting for what the network urgently needed: a general theory of noncommercial broadcasting that prioritized listening over talking, recognition over declaration, and mutual obligation over individual rights."[103]

[102] Dunaway, "Pacifica Radio," 246.
[103] Lasar, *Pacifica Radio*, 228.

WPFW represents a microcosm of the larger structural issues happening within Pacifica. Since 2013, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting has withheld funding from Pacifica radio stations due to inadequate accounting and reporting practices, hitting stations like WPFW especially hard. In a March 2016 meeting, Jerry Paris was quoted as saying the station's financial situation was such that it only had 60-90 days worth of funds to operate.[104] While the station hasn't closed, it still faces pervasive budget shortfalls. The station holds up to five pledge drives a year with each pledge drive lasting around 3 weeks. WPFW, along with other Pacifica stations have adamantly rejected the corporate sponsorship model which NPR has embraced. While Paris' comments suggest that WPFW's mission has never been widespread appeal but niche targeting, the station is left with few viable options for sustainable revenue.

104 Steve Kiviat, "WPFW is in Trouble Again, This Time With Financial Woes," *Washington City Paper* (Washington, DC), March 11, 2016, http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/arts/music/blog/13082847/wpfw-is-in-trouble-again-this-time-with-financial-woes.

Conclusion

Black radio in Washington, D.C. stands at the crux of entrepreneurship and entertainment. Commercial and non-commercial alike, radio's business model depends on establishing a personal connection with listeners. Black radio in Washington, D.C. has stayed relevant because, despite an increasingly saturated media landscape, its content and personalities draw in devoted, loyal listeners. However, the approaches that WKYS, WHUR, and WPFW take to programming exemplify the vastly different approaches that black radio stations in Washington have taken to balance authenticity and originality with profit.

Growing up in Washington, D.C., I chose to pursue this area of research because black radio was the soundtrack to my upbringing. WPFW's Saturday jazz programs signaled that it was time for chores in our household. WHUR's Christmas programs played Nat King Cole and Etta James as we decorated the tree. WKYS' go-go hour set the tone for many impromptu dance parties in the living room. Radio is unique as it is an extremely private and personal medium, usually consumed alone or in the privacy of one's car or home. In my exploration of this topic, I wanted to understand how radio creates soundscapes that are personalized and tailored to its African-American audiences while remaining economically viable.

Apart from WPFW, programming decisions at all the stations included in my study are primarily motivated by economics. WKYS's programming strategy in particular suggested larger patterns in terms of formulaic approaches within the Radio One ownership structure. WKYS's programming strategy, particularly when contextualized in relation to other programming decisions at urban contemporary Radio One stations, exhibited a degree of McDonaldization. In his 1993 book, *The McDonaldization of Society,* the sociologist George Ritzer suggests that many aspects of society have begun to adopt the traits of a fast food

restaurant. Ritzer points to four key elements of McDonaldization that make it an effective and transferable model: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control.[105] Radio One's acquisitions and programming strategies across stations and radio markets exhibit evidence of this approach. I suggest that Radio One's urban contemporary programming strategy follows the following formula: 1) Play chart toppers; 2) use local DJs; 3) promote and integrate local music into the programming schedule. By keeping music consistent across stations and markets, Radio One takes a large scale, efficient approach to attracting its target demographic. Neke Howse, the program director at WKYS, said that first and foremost the goal of her station is to be "number one in the market, the one stop shop for R&B and Hip Hop."[106] While I did not interview program directors in other Radio One markets, I anticipate their thoughts would be similar. Despite this push for profits and ratings, WKYS and other Radio One stations demonstrated efforts to tailor their content to local audiences through the integration of local music. Whether these efforts were concerted attempts to support local music scenes or purely designed as strategies to attract local audiences, Radio One acknowledges the importance of local specificity and authenticity through these efforts.

WPFW represents the opposite end of the spectrum from WKYS. The station has openly and publicly rejected commercial sources of revenue, often to its detriment. In describing the programming strategy employed at his station, WPFW general manager Jerry Paris describes his content as "content that you can't find anywhere else." While this approach may help bring in niche audiences, it does little to attract a broad, mainstream listener base. Like other non-commercial radio stations, such as NPR affiliates, WPFW relies on pledge drives to fund the

[105] George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, 2015 ed. (n.p.: Sage, 1993), 14-16.
[106]Howse, telephone interview by the author.

station's operations. However, WPFW has a much smaller listener-base than NPR stations, making fundraising much more difficult. In the Washington, D.C. market, the NPR affiliate station WAMU is rated number one on the Nielsen charts while WPFW does not even register in the ratings.[107] Compounded by the realities of a small listener base, WPFW lost its CPB funding as a result of mismanagement and refuses corporate underwriting, leaving it wholly dependent on its listeners for a revenue stream. WPFW's quandary leads us to the question of whether it is possible for a radio station to be innovative, autonomous, and viable in the contemporary economic, technological, and regulatory climate.

At several points, this thesis has put WHUR and WPFW's business practices into conversation with those of NPR and its affiliates. NPR, which has a fiercely loyal fan base and high quality content that includes journalism, music, and experimental podcasts, also has strayed significantly from the traditional non-commercial radio model of rejecting corporate funding and support. However, through its adoption of corporate underwriting, NPR has been able to reach a listenership that is larger than ever through platforms that not only include terrestrial broadcast, but also online streaming, podcasts, and web content. WPFW, which has just begun to embrace podcasting and online streaming, remains at a disadvantage due to its small listener base and lack of such corporate funding. Despite its commitment to original and authentic programming that serves Washington's black and minority communities, WPFW's potential influence has been diminished as a result of its financial picture and mismanagement within the Pacifica network.

Of the three stations included in my study, WHUR illustrated the most holistic approach to broadcasting—acknowledging the necessity for a consistent revenue stream without allowing it to take priority over its values and mission as a station. While WHUR does not take as many

[107] "WASHINGTON, DC RADIO," table.

risks with content as WPFW, it remains just as committed to community engagement and authenticity. WHUR's affiliation with Howard University links it concretely with the Washington black community and notions of prestige and class, enjoying a legacy status among black media in D.C. Its programming reflects a strong connection to the Washington black community with programs such as *The Quiet Storm* fostering and portraying aesthetics of black middle-classness. WHUR's programming is specific and localized enough to merit the station its slogan "Sounds Like Washington." However, unlike WPFW, its content is also mainstream enough to attract broad and diverse audiences that in turn support the station's bottom line. Hector Hannibal, the station's program director noted that above all, the primary goal of WHUR is to make money for the university. Unlike other college radio stations, which have sold their licenses to NPR, WHUR's operations are firmly rooted in the university and the university community itself. The station is primarily run by full time staff but offers internships and other educational opportunities to Howard students. By combining efficient management with education and building a strong local brand, WHUR is one of the best success stories of black radio in Washington.

This thesis primarily explored the motivations driving programming decisions at black radio stations in Washington, D.C. However, further areas of research might include an in-depth exploration of the relationship between specific black radio stations and their listeners. Terrestrial radio has risen in popularity among black and Hispanic audiences, a particularly interesting tend in light of the increasingly saturated and de-localized media landscape.[108] While numerous programming directors described the ways in which their stations appeal to their listener base, interviews with listeners of these stations could reveal the extent to which these

[108] Nielsen, *Audio Today*, 2.

efforts are successful. Radio helps create the soundscape for a city—helping to signify a city's identity through auditory cues broadcast to a geographically defined audience. By exploring the relationship that black listeners have to terrestrial radio stations, I hope to further explore the role of radio in shaping and fostering notions of community.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Participation Form

IRB USE ONLY
Study Number: 2016-10-0061
Approval Date: 12/09/2016
Expires: 12/08/2017

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: Programming Blackness: Black Radio Ownership and Station Autonomy in Washington, D.C.

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about black radio in Washington, D.C. The purpose of this study is explore the relationship between station ownership and programming strategies at black radio stations in Washington, D.C.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a series of interview questions regarding your involvement with radio in Washington, D.C. as well as programming strategies that your station employs. This study will take approximately 30 minutes and will include approximately 12 study participants. Your participation will be digitally audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are minimal risks, no greater than those in everyday life. However, those risks will be minimized by secure storage of data. Possible risks might include the disclosure of classified or

confidential information. These risks will be mitigated be keeping interview questions general and avoiding sensitive subject matter and secure storage of data

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, if you choose to participate, you will contribute to a better understanding of the radio industry in Washington, D.C.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected by storing recorded audio files and the transcript of the interview on a password protected computer that only the principal investigator (Nora Bess) will have access to. Additionally, you have the option to indicate any information that you would like to say "off the record." Upon indication of this, the audio recorder will be turned off and your statements will not be recorded or used in the final findings

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If you choose to participate in this study, you **will be audio** recorded. Any **audio** recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for **5 years after the interview date** and then erased.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher, Nora Bess at **[phone]** or send an email to **[email]** for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2016-10-0061

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact,

anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at [phone] or email at [email].

Participation

If you agree to participate, please give your verbal consent to Nora Bess at the time of your interview.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1. What would you say the mission or goal of your station is? Do you see radio (in particular your radio station) as serving more as an entertainment vehicle or a marketing tool?
2. Can you speak more on the culture of your radio station? What are the particular values or priorities that characterize (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW)?
3. What role does revenue play in programming decisions at (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW)? What are the main drivers behind programming decisions?
4. How do you balance keeping advertisers and listeners happy?
5. Are there certain programming "formulas" that (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW) employs?
6. Who are the major advertisers or supporters of (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW)?
7. What are some of the major program formats that (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW) employs? What do the people listening to your station want to hear, generally?
8. What is the role of syndicated content in your programming strategies?
9. Specifically, what is the target demographic for your station?
10. Would you say that (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW) is more focused on acquiring new listeners or retaining current ones?
11. What are some strategies that programmers employ to do this?
    a. How do do different DJs and programmers bring their own personalities and their own unique priorities/values to programming?
        i. Who do they answer to and how does this affect what they play?
        ii. What are their priorities in terms of programming content?
12. What shows or programs typically bring in the most revenue at (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW)?
13. What do you see as key moments in the life of (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW) and why do you see these as key moments?
14. How have you seen the radio industry, specifically in Washington, change over time and what do you see as some of the forces driving this change?
15. What do you see in the future for (WKYS/WHUR/WPFW)? What are some challenges that your station is facing and what are some strategies being used to address these.
16. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Nora Ama Bess was born and raised in Washington, D.C. She left behind government shutdowns, blue crabs, and eighth graders on school trips to pursue degrees in Plan II Honors and Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin. After graduation, Nora hopes to work in television programming and scheduling…if Netflix doesn't make television obsolete by then.